

THE STRAITS TIMES

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Out with the old, in with the new

Jonathan Teo, 17, modelling the new Tampines Meridian Junior College (TMJC) physical education kit yesterday, on the first day of school at the recently merged junior college. At morning assembly, flags bearing the crests of Tampines JC and Meridian JC were lowered, before the new TMJC flag was hoisted. Principal Pamela Yoong told the students it was "a reminder to all of us that we carry the heritage and culture of two parent colleges".

ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

[SEE HOME](#) B1&2



Malaysian rulers set deadline to pick king

Malaysia will appoint a new king by the end of this month, after Sultan Muhammad V of Kelantan stepped down on Sunday just two years into his five-year reign. The 16th king will be decided by a ballot among the nine Malay rulers. Though only a constitutional monarch, the king is seen as a symbol of Malay power and protector of Islam, the state religion. Sultan Muhammad's abdication followed growing discomfort among some of the other Malay sultans over the damage the royal institution had suffered recently.

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New MRT station for Founders' Memorial

The Thomson-East Coast MRT line (TEL) will have an additional stop between the Tanjong Rhu and Gardens by the Bay stations. The Founders' Memorial station will be named after and situated next to a 5ha memorial being built to showcase the contributions of modern Singapore's founders. While the Marina stretch of TEL will open in 2021, the Founder's Memorial station will open four years later, together with the opening of the memorial.

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US-China trade talks enter day 2 amid market optimism

Both sides want to reach a deal, says Chinese Foreign Ministry as Asian markets cheer news

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

China and the United States enter a second day of critical talks today in an effort to ward off a trade war that has threatened to derail markets and economies worldwide. Both sides want to work together to reach an agreement on trade, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said as talks got underway here yesterday.

Asian stock markets cheered the development, with most of them registering gains. The Nikkei ended 2.44 per cent higher, while Seoul's Kospi index bounced 1.34 per cent. The Straits Times Index (STI) was up 43.57 points, or 1.42 per cent, closing at 3,102.80 points. The two-day trade talks began yesterday in the first face-to-face meeting between both sides since

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump met last month in Argentina. Both presidents had then agreed to a 90-day truce in their bitter trade war which had resulted in tariffs levied on billions of dollars worth of goods from both sides. The stand-off has seen the S&P 500 fall 13 per cent since October, while China's stock market was the world's worst performer last year. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said that both sides have agreed to work together to have "constructive talks". "From the start, we have felt that the trade friction between China

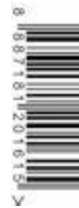
and the US is not beneficial to anyone, or the global economy. China is willing to resolve the dispute based on mutual respect and equal footing," he said. The current round of negotiations is being held at the vice-ministerial level, with the US team of negotiators led by Deputy Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish. These working-level discussions are not expected to yield a concrete deal, but are a substantial step for both sides to gauge each other's offers and demands before their top negotiators – Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer

– can sit down to thrash out a deal. Mr Trump said on Sunday that trade talks with China were going very well, noting that the weak Chinese economy was giving Beijing an incentive to reach a deal. On its part, China has resumed purchases of US soya beans, suspended import tariffs on US cars and also released a draft foreign investment law banning forced technology transfers. Asked about Mr Trump's comments, Mr Lu said the Chinese economy has adequate "resilience and potential", adding: "We have full confidence in the long-term fundamentals of the Chinese economy." But even as the talks kicked off, the US riled the Chinese by sailing navy destroyer USS McCampbell near the disputed Paracel islands in the South China Sea. Beijing claims sovereignty over almost all of the South China Sea, which is disputed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Pacific Fleet spokesman Rachel McMarr told Reuters that the USS McCampbell was carrying out a "freedom of navigation" operation that was not about making a politi-

cal statement. The latest operation comes about a week after the US signed into law the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act, which will beef up the US presence in the Indo-Pacific region. Mr Lu said yesterday that the US actions have violated Chinese and international law, and that Beijing has lodged stern representations with Washington. Asked if this would affect the ongoing talks, Mr Lu said that the "appropriate resolution" of issues between the US and China held benefits to both sides and the world. "So, both sides have the responsibility to create an enabling atmosphere for these talks," he said.

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(January 2019)

10 must-reads for today

1 Marking end of regime

Tens of thousands of Cambodians attended the 40th anniversary of the expulsion of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime at a stadium in Phnom Penh yesterday. Prime Minister Hun Sen was joined for the celebration of what he called the country's "second birthday" at Phnom Penh's Olympic Stadium by traditional Khmer apsara dancers and marching bands. **WORLD A10**



Dancers performing at the Olympic Stadium in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to mark the 40th anniversary of the expulsion of the Khmer Rouge regime. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

2 US, China hold trade talks

Both the US and China want to reach an agreement on trade, said the Chinese Foreign Ministry as a two-day summit began yesterday. Asian stock markets cheered the development, with most of them registering gains. The critical talks are aimed at warding off a trade war that has threatened to derail markets and economies worldwide. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Law is key tool to build ties

Singapore needs to build and manage its network of relations with other countries and, as a small state, the law is an important tool which enables it to do so, Attorney-General Lucien Wong said. He was speaking at the Opening of Legal Year 2019 yesterday. **TOP OF THE NEWS A8**

4 More join trade corridor

Four more Chinese provinces joined a new land and sea trade corridor connecting western China to South-east Asia yesterday, taking the total number of western and southern provinces that are on board to eight. Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing and Chongqing party boss Chen Min'er witnessed the signing of the pact by the four new signatories alongside the four provinces that originally signed the agreement. **WORLD A9**

5 Thailand's twin transitions

In the year ahead, fresh elections and a new monarch will be key to how Thailand finds its way in a changed political landscape after years of political stasis following a military coup, says Thitinan Pongsudhirak. **OPINION A15**

6 Govt to run ElderShield

The Government will run ElderShield from 2021 after reaching an agreement with Aviva, Great Eastern and NTUC Income, the private insurers currently administering the scheme. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Health said the Government will operate the scheme on a not-for-profit basis. **HOME B2**

7 F-15 plan in NZ scrapped

A proposal for Singapore's F-15 fighter jet training to be conducted in New Zealand on a long-term basis will not be taking off, said the Ministry of Defence yesterday. The decision follows nearly two years of discussions between the two countries, and confirms a New Zealand media report last month that the plans have been scrapped due to "excessive costs". **HOME B3**

8 Lift for air transport sector

A new SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programme will give fresh polytechnic graduates in the air transport sector a head start in their careers. **BUSINESS C1**

9 Loss makes boxer hungrier

Singapore's top female professional boxer Nurshahidah Roslie says a decision defeat by Australian fighter April Adams last July has made her "hungrier than ever". She is shaping up for a shot at the World Boxing Council Silver super bantamweight title later this year, with a fight in Bangkok at the end of the month. **SPORT C7**

10 Burning words

What if a book were written to be burned? Author Clara Chow writes about spending a month living in a small traditional Malay house in Selangor, writing poems on joss paper, which she then invited people to help her burn. **LIFE D3**

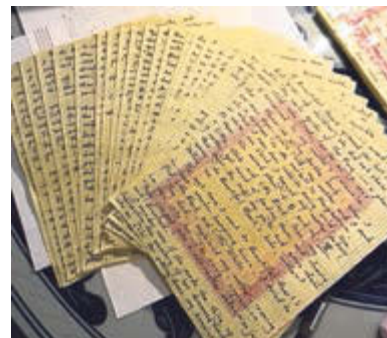


PHOTO: CLARA CHOW

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VIDEO

Passion takes flight

Check out civil servant Carlos Ong's beautiful butterfly kites. The kite-flying enthusiast is able to make miniature kites that are not merely decorative ornaments, but can actually fly too. <http://str.sg/butterflykite>



VIDEO

Tips from travel host

Taiwanese travel show host Marco Liao, who was in Singapore recently, tells us what his favourite local dishes are, where he likes to go in the Lion City and offers some handy travel tips. <http://str.sg/marcoliao>

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AGC refers case involving Lee Suet Fern to Law Society

It cites possible professional misconduct by her in preparing Lee Kuan Yew's last will

Royston Sim
Deputy News Editor (Politics)

The long-running feud between the Lee siblings over 38 Oxley Road has taken a new turn, with allegations of possible professional misconduct by Mrs Lee Suet Fern in preparing the last will of her father-in-law, founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew.

The Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) has made a complaint to the Law Society, but said in a statement yesterday its move does not relate to the validity of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew's last will.

It issued the statement a day after Dr Lee Wei Ling disclosed the AGC's complaint in a Facebook post on Sunday night.

She and Mr Lee Hsien Yang have repeatedly clashed with their older brother, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, over whether their late father's house should be preserved or demolished.

Noting it became aware of a possible case of professional misconduct by Mrs Lee, the AGC said it has a statutory duty to deal with misconduct by lawyers. It also said that under the Legal Profession Act, it is required to consider if it should refer the matter to the Law Society.

Responding in a Facebook post last night, Mr Lee Hsien Yang questioned what is the public interest that is being served by the AGC and why is it rushing the case this year when the facts were known by all

parties for years. He also asked the AGC to release the full correspondence with his wife Suet Fern, saying its assertion that she refused to respond is untrue.

In its statement, the AGC said Mrs Lee appears to have prepared the late Mr Lee's last will and arranged for him to execute it, despite her husband being a beneficiary in the will.

It noted that Mr Lee Hsien Yang, whose share increased under the final will, had said publicly the last will was drafted by Ms Kwa Kim Li of law firm Lee & Lee. But Ms Kwa has denied drafting it.

The AGC cited the Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules, saying it stipulates that lawyers do not place themselves in a position of conflict.

"Where a person intends to make a significant gift by will to any member of the lawyer's family, the lawyer must not act for the person and must advise him to obtain independent advice in respect of the gift. This rule applies even if the lawyer is related to the person making the gift," the AGC said.

Mrs Lee's conduct appears to be in breach of the rules, it said.

Deputy Attorney-General Lionel Yee is overseeing the case as Attorney-General Lucien Wong has recused himself, the AGC said. Mr Wong did so as he was previously PM Lee's personal lawyer.

AGC added that it has written to Mrs Lee several times since last October asking her to explain the posi-

tion and her role, if any, in preparing the last will.

It said Mrs Lee was assured the matter would end if she had good explanations for her conduct, but she did not answer the questions despite asking for more time.

The AGC then referred the case to the Law Society, and Mr Yee further asked that it be referred to a disciplinary tribunal.

In doing so, the AGC said it does not make any findings on the merits of the case, adding that it is for the disciplinary tribunal appointed by the Chief Justice to investigate, determine if there was misconduct and what action should be taken.

Mrs Lee is entitled to make her case to the tribunal as well, it said.

Law Society president Gregory Vijayendran said it is not unusual for the AGC to make complaints against lawyers, and that judges do so as well. "This is not a bolt from the blue or something we are looking at for the very first time in our industry," he added.

Mr Vijayendran said he could not comment further as the Legal Profession Act mandates that such proceedings be kept confidential.

Complaints against lawyers are first referred to a review committee, and escalated to an inquiry committee and disciplinary tribunal, if necessary. But complaints by the AGC or judges skip the first stage and go straight to the inquiry committee.

The AGC and judges also have the discretion to bypass the first two stages, and refer the complaint directly to a disciplinary tribunal.

In her Facebook post, Dr Lee said the AGC had recently lodged more than 500 pages of complaint to the



ST FILE PHOTO

Mrs Lee Suet Fern: Questions over her role

The eldest daughter of renowned economist Lim Chong Yah, Mrs Lee Suet Fern, 60, is one of Singapore's top corporate lawyers.

She graduated from Cambridge University in 1980 with a double first in law, and has worked for top firms such as Lee & Lee, Norton Rose and Wong Partnership.

In 2000, she founded Stamford Law Corporation, which became a brand name in the mergers and acquisitions field. Stamford Law merged with top US firm Morgan Lewis & Bockius to create Morgan Lewis Stamford in 2015. Mrs Lee was conferred the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from legal-ranking publication Chambers Asia-Pacific in 2016.

Reports in 2017 said that Mrs Lee stepped down from her managing director role at Morgan

Lewis Stamford but continues to head the international leadership team.

Mrs Lee is married to Mr Lee Hsien Yang, the younger son of Singapore's first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. The couple have three sons: Li Shengwu, Li Huanwu and Li Shaowu.

In a summary of his statutory declarations to a ministerial committee on 38 Oxley Road, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had raised questions about his sister-in-law's role in the preparation and signing of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew's last will.

In the latest development, the Attorney-General's Chambers yesterday said that it has referred a case to the Law Society over possible professional misconduct by Mrs Lee.

Adrian Lim

Society – "not even Hsien Loong who was advised by Lucien Wong (previously his personal lawyer, now AG)".

"Why therefore this new attack on our father's will? Why is this being initiated now, and by the AGC, after all this time? Our view is that this action is wholly without merit," Dr Lee said.

roysim@sph.com.sg

Additional reporting by Fabian Koh

LEE HSIEN YANG RESPONDS TO AGC STATEMENT

My wife was never Lee Kuan Yew's lawyer. Our father's private will was executed some five years ago. Our father informed his entire family and his lawyers at Lee & Lee when he completed his will and kept his will at Lee & Lee. This was his re-signing of his 2011 will in which Minister Shanmugam was involved.

Lee & Lee had been our father's lawyers for all his wills since his first will in 1995. That first will was drafted by our mother, Kwa Geok Choo, who was then the principal beneficiary under our father's will.

No one has complained from the outset on the process and circumstances of our father's signing his final will – not Lee Kuan Yew, not his estate which stands in his shoes after his death, not any of the beneficiaries, including Lee Hsien Loong, who was advised by Lucien Wong, now AG.

The will was proven in court in 2015 with no issues raised; all parties have acted in accordance with the will since then.

What public interest is being served by AGC here? Why waste public resources on a private matter, and after all this time? Why is AGC rushing this case in 2019 when the facts were known by all parties for years?

AGC's assertion that my wife refused to respond is untrue. AGC should release the full correspondence.

”

MR LEE HSIEN YANG, in a Facebook post last night.

Running dispute over Oxley house

The dispute over 38 Oxley Road erupted in the public sphere in June 2017, when the younger Lee siblings posted a statement on Facebook to say they had lost confidence in their older brother's leadership and feared the use of organs of state against them.

The two siblings made other allegations against him, such as him using his position as prime minister to influence a ministerial committee looking into options for founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew's house.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong responded by releasing a summary of his statutory declarations to the ministerial committee on 38 Oxley Road, in which he set out what he said were the "troubling circumstances" surrounding the preparation of the late Mr Lee's last will.

His siblings hit back via multiple Facebook postings.

PM Lee later refuted the charges of abuse of power in a two-day Parliament sitting in July 2017. He said there was no evidence to back up the claims, and that he and the Government had acted properly and with due process.

After the session, his siblings said in a statement that they would stop making further posts against PM Lee for the time being, provided their wish and their father's desire to demolish the Oxley Road house "are not attacked or misrepresented".

They also said they welcomed PM Lee's desire to settle their quarrel in private, and looked forward "to talking without the involvement of lawyers or government agencies".

In an October 2017 interview with CNBC, PM Lee said he was unsure if the dispute had been resolved, saying the matter was "in abeyance" – a state of temporary inactivity. He also said he had not communicated with his siblings recently.

In April last year, the ministerial committee laid out three broad options for the house, but left the final decision on it to a future government. The options ranged from preserving the house as a national monument to demolishing it and letting the owner redevelop it for residential use.

Mr Lee Hsien Yang and his sister Lee Wei Ling took issue with the report, saying it did not accurately represent their father's wishes.



Mr Lee Kuan Yew's home at 38 Oxley Road. A clause on the demolition of the house, drafted for previous versions of the will but subsequently deleted, came to be reinstated in the last will. ST FILE PHOTO

Events in the 24 hours leading to LKY's last will

In June 2017, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong issued an edited summary of what he told the ministerial committee in his statutory declarations about the will of founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew.

PM Lee set out the sequence of events surrounding the late Mr Lee's seventh and final will.

He noted that the late Mr Lee (LKY) had made six wills before his last will in December 2013, and the earlier six were prepared by lawyer Kwa Kim Li (KKL).

The first will stated that all the three children – PM Lee, Mr Lee Hsien Yang (LHY) and Dr Lee Wei Ling – should get an equal share of his estate; but in the sixth will, Mr Lee gave his daughter an extra share.

In his last will, however, he re-

verted to his original decision to divide his estate equally among his children.

In his declarations, PM Lee questioned the role Mrs Lee Suet Fern (LSF), Mr Lee Hsien Yang's lawyer wife, played in the preparation of the last will. He noted she had sent an e-mail to Mr Lee on Dec 16, 2013, at 7.08pm, which she copied to her husband and Ms Kwa.

She appeared to attach a file to the e-mail, and said it was the original will that ensures all three children receive equal shares. She also asked Ms Kwa to engross the will.

PM Lee then highlighted an e-mail his brother sent on Dec 16, 2013, at 7.31pm, in which Mr Lee Hsien Yang said he could not get in touch with Ms Kwa, and told Mr

Lee that it was not wise to wait for her to return to change his will.

Ms Wong Lin Hoe, Mr Lee's private secretary, was copied in this e-mail. Ms Kwa was not.

PM Lee said it was unclear what efforts Mr Lee Hsien Yang and his wife had made to contact Ms Kwa. "In fact, KKL subsequently told LSF (the following afternoon, when she learnt what had happened) that she did not seem to have received LSF's e-mail," PM Lee said.

"It is also not clear why LHY thought that there was an urgency to the matter. It is, however, interesting that he suggested that his wife, clearly an interested party, and her partners would prepare the new will."

PM Lee listed subsequent e-

mails to show that in the space of 41 minutes, from 7.31pm to 8.12pm, Mrs Lee saw to the preparation of the new will and got one of her lawyers to be on standby to get it executed by Mr Lee.

Mr Lee replied at 9.42pm, agreeing to Mr Lee Hsien Yang's suggestion. The next morning on Dec 17, 2013, two lawyers from Mrs Lee's law firm arrived at Mr Lee's residence to procure his signature on the last will, and were at the property for 15 minutes.

"They plainly came only to witness Mr Lee signing the last will and not to advise him," PM Lee said.

PM Lee also said neither he nor his sister was copied in this e-mail correspondence on Dec 16 or 17, 2013, on the making and signing of

their father's last will.

He became aware of these troubling circumstances later, he said.

A day after PM Lee put up his statutory declarations, Mr Lee Hsien Yang said lawyers from his wife's firm did not draft the will.

"Paragraph 7 of the will was drafted at LKY's direction, and put into language by Lee Suet Fern his daughter-in-law and when he was satisfied, he asked Kim Li to insert it into his will," said Mr Lee Hsien Yang.

"On LKY's express instructions in writing, two lawyers from Stamford Law were called upon to witness his signing of the will," he added.

Mr Lee Hsien Yang did not explain how a clause on the demolition of the house at 38 Oxley Road, drafted for previous versions of the will but subsequently deleted, came to be reinstated in the last will.

Linette Lai

Founders' Memorial to get its own stop on new MRT line

Thomson-East Coast Line station and memorial both set to open in 2025

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport Correspondent

The Thomson-East Coast MRT Line (TEL) will have an additional stop between the Tanjong Rhu and Gardens by the Bay stations.

The Founders' Memorial station will be named after and situated next to a 5ha memorial being built to showcase the contributions of modern Singapore's founders. Both are scheduled to open in 2025.

Engineering provisions for an MRT station have already been put in place – in anticipation of future developments in the area – but the station was not announced earlier because plans for the memorial were confirmed only in 2017.

The Land Transport Authority (LTA) said yesterday that China Railway First Group has been awarded a \$242.4 million contract to build the station, and construction work will start later this year.

While the Marina stretch of the Thomson-East Coast Line will open in 2021, the Founder's Memorial station will open four years later, "in tandem with the opening of Founder's Memorial", the LTA said.

It was reported last year that the memorial site will be housed in a garden, within which an indoor gallery will be built.

There will likely be permanent and temporary galleries as well as a visitor centre and multi-purpose rooms which could host school excursions and citizenship ceremonies.

Separately, the LTA announced a breakthrough with the Katong Park station on the TEL, which brings this stage of the TEL to around 40 per cent completion.

Because of the narrow site constraints – a two-lane road measuring 6m wide flanked by high-rises and at least one pre-war house – Katong Park will have a stacked station platform configuration.

That is, it will have one platform built on top of another, as opposed to them being parallel to each other.

While stacked station platforms and tunnels are uncommon but not unique to Katong Park, the LTA said it was the first time that tunnel-boring machines were used to construct them through a station.

The method requires the lower station platform (and tunnels) to be built first, before the one above can be built. This requires more time.

After tunnelling is done, the station sites are then excavated.

Yesterday, Senior Minister of State for Transport Janil Puthucherry took to the wheel of an excavator equipped with a jackhammer to break through a tunnel segment where the upper station platform will be built.

Dr Janil later posted on Facebook about the new Founders' Memorial station, saying that "the new station offers another travel option for visitors to this landmark that honours Singapore's founding generation of leaders".

The first stage of the TEL – a three-station stretch from Woodlands South to Woodlands North – will open later this year. The LTA said the second stage – from Caldecott to Springleaf – is 80 per cent complete and will open next year.

By 2021, the third stage from Gardens by the Bay to Mount Pleasant will open. Then in 2023, the eastern stretch from Tanjong Rhu to Bayshore will follow.

The last stage, which goes from Bedok South to Sungei Bedok, will be ready in 2024, along with an integrated facility which incorporates three MRT depots and one bus depot.

And when Changi Airport Terminal 5 is up by around 2030, the line is likely to be extended farther to serve it.

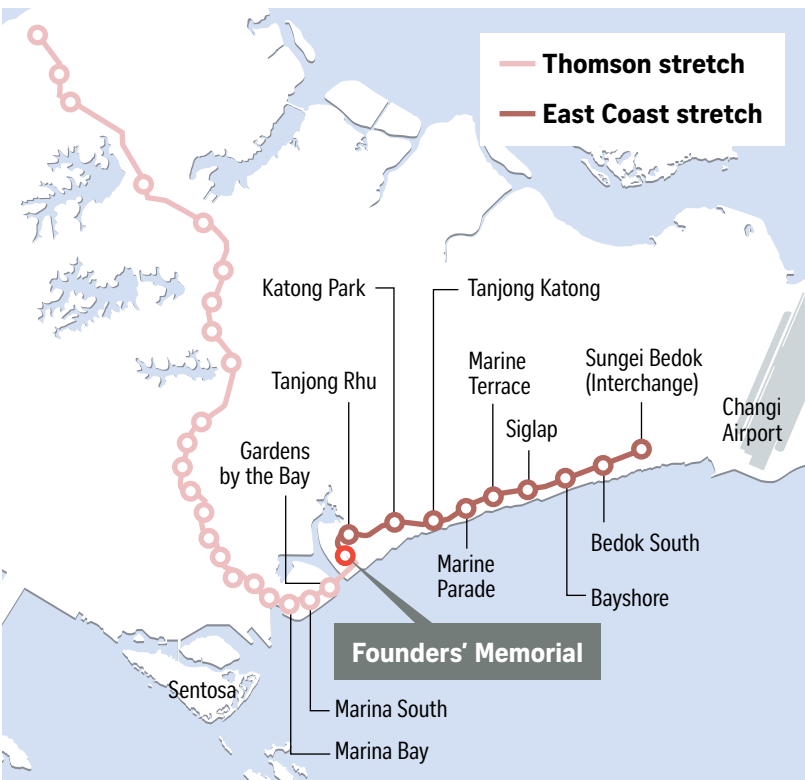
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The first stage of the TEL – a three-station stretch from Woodlands South to Woodlands North – will open later this year.



From far left: Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Baey Yam Keng, Senior Minister of State for Transport Janil Puthucherry and Mountbatten MP Lim Biow Chuan at the Katong Park MRT station work site yesterday. Dr Janil broke through a tunnel segment where the upper station platform will be built with an excavator. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Thomson-East Coast Line stations



Source: LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

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Sultan Muhammad V, seen here in a 2017 photo, stepped down on Sunday in an unprecedented move. A new king and his deputy will be sworn in at the end of the month. PHOTO: REUTERS

Malaysian rulers to pick new king by end of month

Neither palace nor government has given reason for Sultan Muhammad V's abdication

Hazlin Hassan
Malaysia Correspondent
In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's Conference of Rulers will meet in about two weeks to elect the country's new constitutional monarch and his deputy after the King, Sultan Muhammad V, stepped down on Sunday in an unprecedented move.

The 16th king, or supreme ruler, and his deputy will be sworn in at the end of the month, Keeper of the Royal Seal Syed Danial Syed Ahmad said in a press statement.

Yesterday morning, six of Malaysia's nine ruling monarchs held a meeting at the national palace, Istana Negara, following Sultan Muhammad's decision to step down as the Malaysian king.

"The rulers attending this gathering have fixed Thursday, Jan 24, 2019, to hold a special Conference of Rulers meeting for the purpose of electing the Yang di-Pertuan Agong XVI and the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong," Tan Sri Syed Danial said in the statement.

"The rulers have also decided that a special meeting for the swearing-in ceremony for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong will be held on

Thursday, Jan 31, 2019," the statement added.

The rulers in attendance at yesterday's meeting were from Perlis, Terengganu, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Perak and Kedah.

According to the statement, the ruler of Pahang did not attend the meeting as he was unwell, and the Sultan of Selangor was overseas.

Sultan Muhammad, who is from Kelantan, was seen performing Friday prayers in the state last week.

Neither the palace nor the Prime Minister's Office has given a reason for the sudden abdication of the 49-year-old Sultan Muhammad after just two years as King – three years short of the usual five-year tenure. Though a constitutional monarch, the King is seen as a symbol of Malay power and protector of Islam, the state religion.

Under Malaysia's unique five-year rotation system involving the nine royal Malay houses, the next in line is Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang, 88, followed by Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, 60, of Johor, and then Sultan Nazrin Shah from Perak, 62.

Sultan Ahmad Shah is not in good health, and his son has been Regent for two years.

The Conference of Rulers groups the nine sultans and four governors of states with no royal families



Sultan Nazrin Shah from Perak, 62, the current Deputy King, will likely serve as Acting King in the interim period, according to media reports. PHOTO: BERNAMA

(Penang, Melaka, Sabah, Sarawak). However, voting for the next king is done only by the nine Malay rulers, with priority given to the monarch who is next in line.

In the interim period, Sultan Nazrin Shah, the current Deputy King, will likely serve as Acting King, reported the New Straits Times.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that the government hopes the new king would be elected as soon as possible.

Tun Dr Mahathir said the election had to be expedited because he had to have an audience with the king on certain matters.

"The government accepts the decision of Sultan Muhammad V to step down. It is in accordance with the

Constitution," Dr Mahathir told reporters after attending an event, according to Bernama news agency.

Deputy Prime Minister Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said that she was saddened to hear of Sultan Muhammad's abdication as he was the one who had pardoned her husband, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who had been jailed for sodomy.

"We respect his decision, but I am also sad as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong was there when a big change happened in the country; he was there to swear in the new Prime Minister and also saw the change of government, which is historic," she told local media.

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Abdication came after brewing disquiet among other state rulers

Shannon Teoh
Malaysia Bureau Chief
In Kuala Lumpur

While there has been public debate over Sultan Muhammad V's conduct as head of state since Pakatan Harapan won the landmark May 9 elections, the idea of the Kelantan ruler ending his reign prematurely was unthinkable, as no previous king had ever abdicated.

But discomfort had been growing among some of the other Malay rulers over the damage the royal institution had suffered in that time.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had complained in June that Sultan Muhammad had not abided by the rule of law in delaying his installation as premier and the appointment of a new attorney-general.

The historic change of government on May 9, which ended Barisan Nasional's unbroken six-decade rule since independence, had generated much public debate about the role of the royalty in Malaysia's democracy. At the same time, the Prime Minister's media adviser Kadir Jasin also claimed that RM257 million (\$84.8 million) had been spent by the King during his 16-month reign.

But the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back was the secretive Nov 22 wedding to Russian beauty queen Oksana Voevodina.

Sultan Muhammad had taken November and December off ostensibly to recuperate after medical treatment. Instead, reports of his private marriage ceremony spread across global news pages and tabloid newspapers.

The 25-year-old Miss Moscow 2015 reportedly converted to Islam – the official religion of Malaysia and all its monarchs – earlier last year, but salacious stories and images of her modelling career and appearances on reality television tarnished Sultan Muhammad's image among conservative Muslims, who make up the vast majority of his home state Kelantan.

Such indiscretions and disagreements with the government are not uncommon, but the regularity of these royal controversies was particularly alarming, given the royals' history with Tun Dr Mahathir.

During his first period in power from 1981 to 2003, Dr Mahathir was repeatedly able to gain public support to clip the wings of the royals. In the early 1990s, his government passed laws that removed some royal immunity and the need for their assent to gazette new laws.

According to official sources, four of the nine state rulers had begun to discuss how to resolve the matter early last month, including the rulers of Perak, currently the Deputy King, and Perlis, one of the more senior royals.

Just days after Perak Sultan Nazrin Shah's stay at the National Palace as Acting King ended on Dec 31, the Conference of Rulers – which gathers three times a year – held an unscheduled meeting.

It was soon after the meeting last Wednesday that rumours swirled that Sultan Muhammad had been asked to step down in a week or face an embarrassing resolution to remove him. But it was not clear then if those pushing for his abdication had the necessary majority of at least five.

Despite the rulers meeting again unofficially without the King over the rest of the week, Dr Mahathir said last Friday that he had no indication about the Sultan's status, and had heard only the same rumours as others.

However, Sultan Muhammad's announcement on Sunday that he would return to Kelantan points to the likelihood that he knew the writing was on the wall and that enough of his peers wanted him out.

While creating the vacancy was done without triggering a crisis, it remains to be seen whether filling it will be as smooth.

The Conference of Rulers met yesterday morning, and while it has four weeks to elect a new king, the royals may want to resolve the matter much sooner to avoid prolonged public disquiet over their affairs.

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The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back was Sultan Muhammad V's secretive Nov 22 wedding to Russian beauty queen Oksana Voevodina (above). PHOTO: REUTERS

The 25-year-old Miss Moscow 2015 reportedly converted to Islam – the official religion of Malaysia and all its monarchs – earlier last year, but salacious stories and images of her modelling career and appearances on reality television tarnished Sultan Muhammad's image among conservative Muslims, who make up the vast majority of his home state Kelantan.

King's decision dominates headlines across Malaysia

Trinna Leong
Malaysia Correspondent
In Kuala Lumpur

Splashed across the front pages of Malaysian newspapers early yesterday was the stepping down of the King for the first time in the country's history.

Most Malaysians were surprised by the decision of Kelantan Sultan Muhammad V to step down on Sunday, and many were keen to find out more about the regulations in selecting a successor.

A commentary by the New Straits Times praised the speed of the royal palace in putting to rest mounting speculation about the monarch's future on the throne.

The daily emphasised that Sultan Muhammad V "is stepping down, not abdicating, as some have put it", adding that the unprecedented resignation "will pass as the coun-

try moves forward with the management of its affairs".

The headlines of most dailies, across different languages, were almost identical: Sultan Muhammad V had stepped down.

Many reprinted an article by official news agency Bernama, "Sultan Muhammad V, a people's King", which painted him as someone with a sense of humour who worked hard to be closer to his subjects.

The King's two-year reign was most memorable for his opening line at the first post-election Parliament sitting last July, when he made a jibe about an earlier walk-out by opposition MPs, quipping: "Please sit down and don't run away." It was a historic session, the first since independence with the former ruling Umno-led coalition now in the opposition.

In a commentary, Malay daily Sinar Harian, noting that the remark drew laughter from both parliamen-

tarians and the people, said the monarch would be sorely missed. Sultan Muhammad's off-the-cuff comment in Parliament went viral, with memes and T-shirts bearing the original phrase in Malay – "Sila duduk dan jangan lari" – becoming trendy. It even spawned a TV talk-show named after that line.

One report yesterday, however, said that the Kelantan ruler had never intended to be the King. Under a rotating system, unique to Malaysia, the heads of the nine royal households in the country take turns to be the king. He is chosen by them in a vote in the Council of Rulers.

"Since the beginning, Tuanku was not really interested in becoming the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, that was the information (I got) at the time," Kelantan Menteri Besar Ahmad Yakob told the Malaysiakini website.

Umno's mouthpiece, Utusan Malaysia, published an article yesterday on a new king, stating that he may not necessarily be the current Deputy King or be chosen on the basis of a rotational system. Citing a constitutional expert, the daily noted that a vote in the Council of Rulers would decide the issue.

Ultimately, it appears Sultan Muhammad's resignation came

about as his fellow rulers sought to protect their own venerable institution.

"Courtiers from among the nine palaces in Malaysia told The Malaysian Insight that the rulers made this unprecedented move to protect the royal institution – already reeling from rising public questioning about their role during the May 9 general election that finally saw Barisan Nasional lose its grip on power since Merdeka, when the pact was known as the Alliance," the news portal wrote in a commentary on Sunday.

"The courtiers said in the meetings among the rulers it was not unanimous but clear that the majority of rulers felt that given all that has happened in the last few months, the King had to step down."

The tipping point was Sultan Muhammad V's questionable choice in marrying a Russian beauty queen, whose past modelling career raised eyebrows, especially in the largely conservative Muslim country and more so in Kelantan, where the state government has long been in the grip of the Islamic party Parti Islam SeMalaysia.

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New auditor-general to take over next month as incumbent retires

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

On Feb 8, Singapore will have a new auditor-general, Ms Goh Soon Poh. The 56-year-old, who is deputy secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Home Affairs Ministry, will take over from Mr Willie Tan Yoke Meng, 63, who is retiring from the post.

A PMO statement yesterday said that Ms Goh will relinquish her appointments when she steps into her new position.

The auditor-general leads the Auditor-General's Office (AGO) in checking the financial accounts and records of government ministries and departments, organs of state



Ms Goh Soon Poh will take over on Feb 8 from Mr Willie Tan Yoke Meng, who is retiring as auditor-general.

and statutory boards. Its findings are published in an annual report, which is publicly available and often draws wide interest.

Ms Goh joined the civil service in 1984 after getting an economics degree from Cambridge University in England on an Overseas Merit Schol-

arship. She was deputy secretary in various ministries, including Education and Finance as well as the Public Service Division.

Since 2009, she has been deputy secretary in the Home Affairs Ministry, and oversees finance, procurement and internal audit matters.

In 2016, she was concurrently appointed deputy secretary (security coordination) at the PMO, where she helps the permanent secretary to oversee the work of the National Security Coordination Secretariat and the Elections Department.

She was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 2000 and the Public Administration Medal (Gold) in 2015.

Mr Tan has been Auditor-General for the last six years and in his term,

he led the AGO to reshape and sharpen its audit strategy as well as enhance public accountability and strengthen financial governance.

The PMO statement noted he sharpened the AGO's focus on the quality of audit and clarity in communicating its findings.

"Mr Tan introduced a new approach of thematic audits, enabling AGO to carry out more in-depth audits of selected areas and to highlight both lapses and positive learning points," it said.

"He set the tone for AGO to be a more professional and progressive national audit institution, emphasising continuous professional development and high auditing standards," it added.

"He also introduced initiatives to prepare the organisation for

the future, including harnessing technology and data analytics."

He also introduced the Auditing Service scholarship in 2014 and backed the launch of the PSC Scholarship (Public Finance) last year.

Mr Tan, who received an engineering degree on a Singapore Armed Forces Overseas Scholarship, was with the military from 1974 until 1989. Subsequently, he held various appointments in the public service, and in 2002, became chief executive of the Central Provident Fund Board. In 2005, he was appointed the Defence Ministry's deputy secretary (administration).

Mr Tan was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 1994 and the Public Administration Medal (Gold) in 2010.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong thanked Mr Tan for his service in a Facebook post yesterday, where he also stressed the important functions of the auditor-general.

The person reports to the President and Parliament on the proper management and use of public funds, and carries out independent audits on public sector agencies.

"The auditor-general is independent in deciding the audit work plan, and what and how the audit findings are reported," PM Lee said.

He also said people must be assured the agencies receive independent audits that are rigorous and impartial, and public moneys are properly spent and accounted for.

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Revised fees at National Eye Centre from March 1

Bills cut for complex surgery, after articles on patient's \$4.50 MediShield Life payout

Felicia Choo

The Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) will revise its fees on March 1 to ensure they remain affordable, the centre and the Ministry of Health (MOH) said in letters to The Straits Times Forum Page yesterday.

The letters are in response to the case of patient Seow Ban Yam, 82, whose MediShield Life payout of just \$4.50 was the subject of an ST report and commentary that attracted strong comments from readers.

"SNEC recognises that it could do more frequent cost reviews to close prevailing gaps between current cost burden of patients and what it charges for financial sustainability," said its chief operating officer Charity Wai.

"With the latest review of SNEC's charges to better align a wider range of procedures with Medisave and MediShield claim limits, patients requiring complex operations of higher surgical table codes will see reduced charges, including that which Mr Seow underwent."

In its letter, MOH said that SNEC's charges are being reviewed to ensure they remain affordable, including for operations such as the one Mr Seow underwent to unblock the flow of his tears.

"We stress that no Singaporean will be denied essential healthcare treatment due to inability to pay," said Ms Lim Siok Peng, director of the ministry's corporate communications division. "The Government provides significant subsidies of up to 80 per cent to keep healthcare costs low, and all Singaporeans are protected against large healthcare bills through MediShield Life."

The articles, by ST senior health correspondent Salma Khalik, threw the spotlight on the disparity between subsidised surgical fees and the claimable amount from MediShield Life. Mr Seow's subsidised bill at SNEC for surgery to unblock the flow of his tears was \$4,477, but only \$3,005 was claimable.

Being over 80 years old, he had to pay the deductible of \$3,000. That left \$5 of the bill – of which 90 per cent, or \$4.50, was paid for by MediShield Life.

SNEC, in its letter, said that the surgery Mr Seow underwent – a duct drainage operation – is uncommon, with only seven cases out of the 42,000 procedures it performed in 2017.

ST's commentary had questioned whether a national referral centre should need, and be allowed, to charge substantially more than public hospitals for a treatment that both do, and asked if patients at these specialist centres are subsidising the cost of their research.

SNEC said that its budget for research and education is funded separately by government grants, philanthropy and other income totally unrelated to clinical revenue from subsidised patients.

The commentary also asked whether public institutions like SNEC are charging too much, if the government subsidy to these places is insufficient or if the claimable amounts under MediShield Life are set too low and do not reflect real costs.

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SEE FORUM B8

ST senior health correspondent Salma Khalik's Dec 31 report (right) and commentary on Mr Seow Ban Yam's case attracted strong comments from readers.



A Chinese flag is seen on the land secured by electric-vehicle maker Tesla for its \$6.8 billion Gigafactory 3 in Shanghai. PHOTO: REUTERS

Musk breaks ground on Tesla's Shanghai factory

BEIJING • After four years of planning, Tesla Inc is finally breaking ground for its US\$5 billion (\$6.8 billion) factory in the world's biggest auto market. But the timing could not be more inauspicious.

Chief executive officer Elon Musk was in Shanghai to lay the foundation yesterday for what would be the electric-vehicle maker's first car-manufacturing facility outside the United States.

While the event marked a new journey in Tesla's 15-year history, it came at a point where China's economy is showing signs of strain following the tariff spat with the US.

The billionaire entrepreneur is facing a car market that probably shrank last year for the first time since at least the 1990s as uncertainties surrounding the trade war between the world's two biggest economies, signs of weakening domestic demand in China and a stock slump take a toll on consumers.

The challenging environment also includes competition from several start-ups that all want to be like Tesla.

The China plant is the result of years of negotiations with Beijing, and a personal triumph for Mr Musk, who faced a disastrous 2018.

The US Securities and Exchange Commission moved to punish Tesla last year after Mr Musk's infamous "funding secured" tweet, with fines and a settlement that required corporate governance reforms. It also came on the back of Tesla's ability to ramp up production of Model 3 sedans, marking the beginning of a turn in market sentiment.



Tesla CEO Elon Musk speaking at the Tesla Shanghai Gigafactory 3 ground-breaking ceremony yesterday. The plant may be crucial for Tesla as it staves off a potential dip in demand in the US, its biggest market, after reductions in federal tax credits for electric vehicles. PHOTO: REUTERS

A Chinese plant may be crucial for Tesla, which is struggling to stave off a potential dip in demand at home, its biggest market, after reductions in federal tax credits for electric vehicles.

The company cut the prices of all its models by US\$2,000 to partially offset the loss of the subsidy.

A fully owned facility would also mean Tesla would not need to share its profits and technology with Chinese partners, unlike other foreign carmakers, which are required to form a domestic joint venture.

Domestic production would help shield Tesla from import duties as the US and China find ways to wriggle out of the tariff quandary. The two sides have called a truce and are engaged in talks to cool tensions, with China temporarily scrap-

ping the retaliatory 25 per cent tax starting on Jan 1.

At the height of the dispute, when China imposed the additional duty on American-made autos, Tesla sales in the Asian country, its second-largest market, plunged to as low as 211 in October, from 3,552 in June, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Intelligence. In November, they clocked 393.

The drop in the numbers is not just a direct effect of the trade war. Stock losses in China last year wiped out more than US\$2 trillion worth of wealth, denting consumer appetite for luxury goods.

Passenger car sales declined for six consecutive months to November, and are on course for an annual decline.

A key China purchasing man-

agers' index fell below 50 last month to its lowest reading since May 2017, signalling weakening demand in the country's US\$12.2 trillion economy.

Tesla signed a preliminary agreement in July with the Shanghai government last year to build the 500,000-unit factory in the Chinese city. In October, it said it paid about US\$140 million to secure more than 81ha of land for the planned Gigafactory 3.

The facility is expected to churn out about 250,000 vehicles annually at first – the Model 3 and the planned Model Y – and that capacity will double over time.

Tesla, which has said that it plans to use mostly local debt to fund the factory, plans to start production this year.

The company may initially start off with a general assembly facility and investors should not expect production to start this year, according to Mr Maynard Um, an analyst at Macquarie Capital (USA) Inc.

"While this may not produce the same tariff reduction benefits, we expect there would still be some model benefit, particularly as the company vertically integrates the supply chain within China," Mr Um wrote in a note on Jan 3.

BLOOMBERG

SEE BUSINESS C2

A fully owned facility would also mean Tesla would not need to share its profits and technology with Chinese partners, unlike other foreign carmakers, which are required to form a domestic joint venture. Domestic production would help shield Tesla from import duties as the US and China find ways to wriggle out of the tariff quandary.

As a small state, law is key tool in managing ties with others: A-G

Handling of S'pore's cross-border ties a key theme for AGC over past year, Lucien Wong says at opening of legal year

Fabian Koh

Singapore needs to build and manage its network of relations with other countries, and as a small state, the law is an important tool which enables it to do so, Attorney-General Lucien Wong said.

He was speaking at the Opening of the Legal Year 2019 at the Supreme Court yesterday, where he noted that the management of the Republic's cross-border relationships was a key theme for the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) over the past year.

"We, as Singaporeans, have grown up with the mantra that Singapore as a small nation-state has no hinterland and is dependent on trade and human connections to thrive," he told members of the le-

gal community, in underlining the law's role in maintaining Singapore's ties with other states.

"It has been a challenging year in this regard, with our bilateral ties with our closest neighbour put to the test," he added. "As a small country, Singapore is never immune from political changes in neighbouring countries, especially Malaysia."

Mr Wong noted that while the dispute over Pedra Branca ended amicably with Malaysia withdrawing its applications about two weeks before their scheduled hearing at the International Court of Justice, the change in government across the Causeway has had significant impact on ongoing bilateral projects, such as the planned Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail.

"Our officers were on hand to advise the Government on this mat-

ter, working in support of the negotiating teams," he said. "The outcome was a positive and balanced one, resulting in a mutually agreeable resolution between both countries that also ensured that Singapore's interests were safeguarded."

The AGC recently continued its support of the Government on a number of issues concerning Malaysia, he added, citing three cases: The purported extension of Johor port limits into Singapore territorial waters, airspace management over southern Johor and the review of water prices under the 1962 Water Agreement with Malaysia.

Singapore has described Malaysia's unilateral extension of Johor Baru port limits on Oct 25 and repeated intrusions by Malaysian government vessels into the Republic's waters as a serious violation of Singapore's sovereignty and international law.

Malaysia has also objected to new landing procedures for Seletar Airport and wants to review the price of water supplied to Singapore.

In a speech at an education bursary event on Sunday, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong touched on a similar theme. He noted that while Singapore is friends with its neighbours, issues crop up from time to time.

"We need to know how to deal with our neighbours... to maintain good relations with them, to cooperate with them but at the same time to look after our interests and stand up for Singapore," he said.

"You would understand and you would learn that this is the world where we would have to stand up for ourselves... and look after ourselves together as one people so that, small as we are, this little red dot can thrive and can prosper," PM Lee added.

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• Additional reporting by Linette Lai

Singapore, Malaysia foreign ministers meeting here today

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan will meet his Malaysian counterpart Saifuddin Abdullah in Singapore today to discuss recent bilateral disputes.

Malaysia unilaterally extended the Johor Baru port limits on Oct 25, encroaching into the Republic's territorial waters off Tuas. Singapore on Dec 6 extended its own port limits in response, to cover the full extent of the Republic's territorial waters.

Malaysia also objected to new landing procedures for Seletar Airport, saying they would adversely affect developments in Pasir Gudang. It

later established a permanent restricted area for the purpose of military activities over Pasir Gudang.

Today's meeting comes after Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat met Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in Putrajaya on Dec 31.

In his New Year's message, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said issues with Malaysia will be dealt with "calmly and constructively".

Tun Dr Mahathir has also said he is confident the problems can be resolved through negotiation.

PM ON MAINTAINING TIES WITH NEIGHBOURS, SEEING TO SINGAPORE'S INTERESTS

Singapore is a peaceful place. But we live in a very complicated world. South-east Asia is quite a complicated place to be living in.

We are friends with our neighbours but we also, from time to time, have issues with our neighbours, problems come up. We need to know how to deal with our neighbours from one country to another country, from one people to another people, to maintain good relations with them, to cooperate with them but at the same time to look after our interests and stand up for Singapore.

We hope, as you study in school, as you grow up, as the boys go on to do national service, and the girls go out and work, you read the newspapers and watch the television and you see what is happening around us.

You would understand and you would learn that this is the world where we would have to stand up for ourselves, look after ourselves, and look after ourselves together as one people so that, small as we are, this little red dot can thrive and can prosper.



PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG, in remarks at a bursary presentation ceremony in his Teck Ghee ward on Sunday.

Courts, AGC boosting efforts to tackle rising workload and tap IT

Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

The judiciary and the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) are ramping up efforts to deal with an increasing workload while tapping technology to increase efficiency and devise lower-cost solutions for the public.

At the opening of the legal year ceremony yesterday, Attorney-General Lucien Wong said there will be an increase in headcount for the next five fiscal years, comprising mostly legal officers, to manage the government-wide demand for legal services that has been on the rise in recent years.

For example, he said, the AGC has seen more requests for new and updated legislation.

The number of Bills has risen by 167 per cent and the pages of Bills produced has grown by 169 per cent since financial year 2013, he said.

There has also been an increase in the volume of domestic criminal and civil cases handled by the AGC, as well as disputes at an international level.

There are also more complex cases that require "much thought and delicate handling", he said, ranging from constitutional and administrative law challenges, to the sentencing of mentally ill offenders, to complex fraud and market manipulation cases.

In a similar vein, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon said the caseload of the Court of Appeal – Singapore's highest court – is more than 50 per cent higher than in 2013. The cases being heard are also increasing in



At the opening of the legal year ceremony yesterday were (front row, from left) Justice Chan Seng Onn, Justice Woo Bih Li, Justice Choo Han Teck, Judge of Appeal Tay Yong Kwang, Judge of Appeal Andrew Phang, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Judge of Appeal Judith Prakash, Judge of Appeal Steven Chong, Justice Belinda Ang, Justice Lee Sei Kin and Justice Quentin Loh; (back row, from left) Judicial Commissioner Ang Cheng Hock, JC Tan Puay Boon, JC Pang Khang Chau, Justice Debbie Ong, Justice Valerie Thean, Justice Chua Lee Ming, Justice Tan Siong Thye, Justice Vinodh Coomaraswamy, Justice See Kee Oon, Justice Kannan Ramesh, Justice Hoo Sheau Peng, Justice Aedit Abdullah, JC Audrey Lim, JC Mavis Chionh and JC Dedar Singh Gill. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

complexity, he added.

To cope with the growing caseload, High Court Justices Belinda Ang and Quentin Loh have sat regularly on the Court of Appeal. They will be joined by Justice Woo Bih Li this year, said CJ Menon.

The number of days on which the Court of Appeal sits to hear

cases has also been increased.

"Beyond this, we will also examine possible structural adjustments to help address the growing appellate caseload," said CJ Menon.

The complex matters on their plate included the criminal case involving the misuse of City Harvest Church funds.

In their speeches, CJ Menon and Mr Wong also dwelt on ongoing efforts to innovate and harness technology and artificial intelligence.

CJ Menon said that an online dispute resolution platform for motor accident cases is projected to be launched in phases beginning from the end of this year.

Mr Wong highlighted the AGC's efforts to be at the forefront of legal technology. A digital workbench – which allows legal officers to monitor their work, provides a single search point across different databases of precedents and automatically generates statistics – is on track to be launched this year.

Close to 600 members of the local and international legal fraternities, including the chief justices of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, attended the ceremony.

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SEE HOME B6

Law Society to roll out initiatives for the needy and vulnerable

The Law Society is rolling out several new initiatives this year targeted at helping the vulnerable members of society and the needy.

It will be piloting a "low bono" scheme for under-lawyered or un-lawyered litigants, targeted at those who have failed the Legal Aid Bureau's means test and foreign spouses with Singaporean children.

A "low bono" scheme provides legal help at discounted rates for those who do not qualify for pro bono or free legal aid, but find it

difficult to afford a lawyer.

The scheme was announced by the Law Society's president, newly appointed Senior Counsel Gregory Vijayendran, at the opening of the legal year yesterday.

It will be put into operation by the Law Society Pro Bono Services, a corporatised entity and registered charity that was set up to improve access to justice for the needy.

A toolkit for lawyers on questioning the elderly and witnesses with mental incapacities, who are testify-

ing in court, is also in the works this year. The toolkit is a sequel to guidelines that the Law Society issued last year on best practices in examining child witnesses and complainants of sexual offences.

"With these toolkits, the Law Society recognises that effective advocacy needs to be nuanced to the needs of special witnesses in both their interests and that of administration of justice," said Mr Vijayendran.

He also announced that the Law Society Council has agreed to un-

lock more of the Compensation Fund, which was set up to mitigate the losses suffered by victims of lawyers' fraud.

The Law Society will also tackle fake news, and is developing a law fact-check service, modelled after the Legal Fact Check website launched by the American Bar Association in 2016. It aims to launch the service by the second quarter of this year to provide the public with reliable and accurate answers to legal questions arising from news reports.

It also announced a scheme in which a sole proprietor can appoint a fellow lawyer to step in, in the event of prolonged hospitalisation, unexpected medical appointments during pregnancy or even death.

This serves as an interim, stop-gap measure to facilitate uninterrupted practice continuity, said Mr Vijayendran.

Addressing concerns of some criminal-law practitioners that services provided under the Criminal Aid Legal Scheme could be cannibal-

ising fee-paying work, he said a committee was specially set up to review this issue.

A survey showed that 87 per cent of the respondents did not experience any decrease in briefs from 2013 to 2017, and that 92 per cent supported access to legal aid for the indigent.

"In the light of our findings, the Law Society cannot look the other way when faced with the legal needs of the impecunious facing non-capital charges. We will calibrate the right balance of serving our members while serving the needs of society's indigent," he said.

Selina Lum

WORLD



MA'RUF AMIN
INDONESIA'S V-P CANDIDATE
REGRETS TESTIFYING AGAINST
FORMER GOVERNOR AHOK A11



Officials of the eight Chinese provinces – Chongqing, Guangxi, Guizhou, Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Yunnan and Ningxia – signed a pact yesterday to cooperate on the building of the new land and sea trade corridor that links western China to South-east Asia via a network of railway links and the port of Qinzhou in southern Guangxi. ST PHOTO: CHONG KOH PING

More provinces join western China-Asean trade corridor

8 provinces sign pact on network linking Chongqing to Qinzhou port, and sea route to S-E Asia

Chong Koh Ping
China Correspondent
In Chongqing

Four more Chinese provinces have officially joined the new land and sea trade corridor that connects western China to South-east Asia, bringing the total number to eight.

Singapore Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing and Chongqing party boss Chen Min'er yesterday witnessed the signing of a pact involving the first four signatories – Chongqing, Guangxi, Guizhou and Gansu – and the latest additions of Qinghai, Yunnan, Ningxia and Xinjiang at a hotel in downtown Chongqing.

The new trade route is a network of railway links from western China to the port of Qinzhou in southern Guangxi, which connects to South-east Asia by sea.

It extends from the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI), the third joint project between China and Singapore that aims to spur the growth of China's less-developed western region through better transport, financing and data connectivity.

In a meeting before yesterday's signing, Mr Chen told Mr Chan that by renaming the trade route from Southern Transport Corridor to CCI



Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing and Chongqing party boss Chen Min'er met yesterday to discuss the progress of the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative, a joint project between Singapore and China. ST PHOTO: CHONG KOH PING

New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, both countries have elevated the project to a level that could include more dimensions of cooperation.

"Within this initiative, Chongqing acts as the hub on the Chinese side, linking all the western provinces together," said Mr

Chen. "From four to eight, this means we have already helped drive development in the western region," he added.

And he hopes that Singapore, with its international connectivity, can help link the rest of South-east Asia with Chongqing, paving the way for a seamless linkage between

the land and sea parts of the Belt and Road Initiative.

During the meeting, Mr Chan and Mr Chen also discussed the use of innovative measures and software development in the implementation of key projects under the CCI.

They explored ways to use the new trade route to "catalyse both

DEVELOPING WESTERN REGION

From four to eight, this means we have already helped drive development in the western region.



CHONGQING PARTY BOSS CHEN MIN'ER, on the number of provinces in the new land and sea trade corridor.

conventional and modern dimensions of connectivity, such as data, technology, talent and finance", Mr Chan said in a Facebook post after the meeting.

This will result in greater integration of South-east Asia and western China, he added.

Earlier yesterday, Mr Chan attended the ground-breaking ceremony for the Multi-Modal Distribution and Connectivity Centre, a physical hub to plan, develop, manage and optimise multimodal operations across road, rail, river and air.

Mr Chan arrived in Chongqing yesterday for a two-day visit. He is accompanied by Manpower Minister Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State for Health and Transport Lam Pin Min and senior government officials.

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Raffles Medical Group opens its first China hospital in Chongqing

CHONGQING • Raffles Medical Group officially opened its first hospital in China yesterday in south-western Chongqing.

Touted as Singapore's first tertiary hospital in China, Raffles Hospital Chongqing is a 700-bed facility with a gross floor area of more than 100,000 sq m.

The hospital, which is fully owned and operated by the Singapore healthcare player, comes as China promises to open up more sectors, including healthcare, to foreign investors.

Dr Loo Choon Yong, executive chairman of Raffles Medical Group, noted that China presents more opportunities for the group to expand into other cities as it liberalises its healthcare market.

"They are now more used to international hospitals operating. The rules are becoming clearer and, therefore, it will be easier," he told Singapore reporters at the hospital, located in the same district as Chongqing's airport, about half an hour's drive north from the city centre.

With the sector opening up, there will be more players, but it also means that the people will have more choices for the quality of service, quality of care and price efficiency, he added.

Other than targeting affluent locals and expatriates, Raffles Hospital Chongqing hopes to attract foreign patients. Dr Loo said: "Traditionally, you see that people go out of the country for treatment, those who want to choose treatment in the West."

But, at the same time, there are people in other countries, such as in Central Asia, who will go to Sin-



Raffles Hospital Chongqing is a 700-bed facility targeted at affluent locals and expatriates, as well as foreign patients. ST PHOTO: CHONG KOH PING

gapore to seek treatment, he pointed out.

With this new hospital, Dr Loo thinks many of these patients will choose to go to Chongqing in the future.

He said: "So we help them make Chongqing more known as a centre for foreign patients."

Distances have collapsed with improved transport linkages as a result of the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative and it will become more feasible for people to access care in Chongqing, he added.

Other than Chongqing, the group operates medical centres in six Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, as well as in Hong Kong.

It will open a second hospital in Shanghai in the later part of this year.

"We have looked at China for a long time and we decided this is the time," said Dr Loo of the

Other than Chongqing, the group operates medical centres in six Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, as well as in Hong Kong. It will open a second hospital in Shanghai in the later part of this year.

group's expansion in the country. The Shanghai hospital will serve the affluent coastal region in the east.

"Shanghai is more international and it has a big expat population," he added.

Chong Koh Ping

Japan-S. Korea ties in ‘severe state’ amid forced labour spat

Tensions up as Seoul court orders Japan firms to pay compensation over war-time labour

TOKYO/SEOUL • Japan’s top government spokesman yesterday said ties with South Korea are in a “severe state”, signalling that tensions between the neighbours and US security allies could worsen.

Tokyo and Seoul have sparred over decisions in South Korea’s top court requiring two of Japan’s biggest firms to pay compensation to Koreans forced into labour during Japan’s 1910-45 colonial rule.

Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sunday said he would consider counter-measures to protect Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal assets from seizure by Seoul courts.

“Relations between Japan and South Korea are in a severe state,” Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a regular news

conference in Tokyo, calling recent moves by Seoul regrettable.

Mistrust between the two neighbours has also grown as both sides trade accusations about who was in the wrong over a December incident in which Japan claimed a South Korean naval vessel used a target-lock radar on its patrol aircraft. Seoul argued that the plane was flying in a provocative manner and called on Tokyo to apologise.

The two sides have long wrangled over whether Japan has properly atoned for its occupation of the Korean Peninsula, which ended with the Japanese Empire’s defeat in World War II.

The disputes have flared anew since the 2017 election of South Korean President Moon Jae-in, whose

administration has moved to disband a fund to compensate women forced to work in Japanese brothels and backed Koreans’ efforts to pursue the forced labour claims.

Prime Minister Abe told national broadcaster NHK that he had “requested relevant departments to study specific measures based on international law” to prevent South Korea from seizing company assets. He called a bid by plaintiffs to get the court to confiscate company property “very regrettable”.

Mr Abe said a 1965 treaty that normalised relations between the countries resolved all matters regarding compensation claims.

Before Mr Suga spoke, South Korea’s foreign ministry said it expected a sincere response from Japan and declined to directly address Mr Abe’s comment.

Foreign ministers from the two countries talked last week by telephone, South Korea said. Last

\$182k

Maximum amount Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has been ordered to pay to each of the 10 people subject to forced labour.

\$119k

What Nippon Steel has been told to pay to each of four plaintiffs.

month, officials from both countries said they were speaking with each other on ways to address the court’s decisions.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries was ordered to pay up to US\$134,000 (S\$182,000) to each of the 10 people subject to forced labour, while Nippon Steel was ordered to pay four plaintiffs US\$88,000 (S\$119,000) each. There are over a dozen such cases pending in South Korea involving about 70 firms, said Japan’s government.

Lawyers representing South Korean conscript labourers applied to a Pohang city court to seize Nippon Steel assets, said Associated Press last Thursday. The court may decide in two or three weeks whether to accept the request to seize the 2.34 million shares – worth about US\$9.7 million – that Nippon Steel holds in its joint venture with South Korean steelmaker Posco.

Japan and South Korea were each other’s third-largest trading partners in 2017, with more than US\$82 billion in total trade between the two sides.

Although simmering tensions between Japan and South Korea have led to protests on Seoul’s streets and calls to boycott Japanese products, the previous disputes have never escalated to the point where they caused serious economic damage. BLOOMBERG

Trump, Kim may hold second summit in Hanoi

SEOUL • US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un could meet in Vietnam’s capital for their second summit on Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions, the South Korean newspaper Munhwa Ilbo reported yesterday.

Denuclearisation talks have sputtered since Mr Trump and Mr Kim held an unprecedented meeting in Singapore last June, with Washington and Pyongyang each calling on the other to take action.

A second summit could address concerns on global security after Mr Kim piled pressure on Mr Trump by threatening in his annual New Year’s address to take a “new path” if the US didn’t relax economic sanctions.

US officials have met their North Korean counterparts in Hanoi for discussions to adjust scheduling for the talks, the newspaper said, citing high-level diplomatic sources in Seoul and Washington it did not identify. Government officials have not commented. Such a summit would be bound to grab global attention and help boost the profile of the host nation.

But it also presents enormous security challenges for Mr Trump, the leader of the world’s biggest economy, and Mr Kim, head of arguably one of the world’s most paranoid states.

Vietnam is a longstanding ally of North Korea that has good relations with the US. Speculation about the country’s prospects as a summit site grew following North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho’s visit there from Nov 29 to Dec 2.

The South Korean newspaper JoongAng Ilbo previously reported that Mr Mark Lambert, a senior US State Department official handling North Korea issues, had visited Vietnam last month.

It was unclear whether he was in Vietnam at the same time as North Korea’s Foreign Minister.

Hanoi – about a four-hour direct flight from Pyongyang and in airspace over countries friendly to North Korea – boasts several top-class hotels.

Vietnam’s ruling Communist Party also has the security apparatus to squelch protests and keep curious onlookers far away from Mr Trump and Mr Kim.

Mr Trump previously said he planned to hold a second meeting with Mr Kim as early as this month, although a date and location have not yet been announced.

Other places floated as hosts include Singapore, Mongolia and Switzerland. BLOOMBERG



The ceremony marking the 40th anniversary of the expulsion of the Khmer Rouge regime, which ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, at Phnom Penh’s Olympic Stadium yesterday. PHOTOS: REUTERS

Cambodia marks 40 years since Khmer Rouge ouster

PHNOM PENH • Tens of thousands of Cambodians packed a stadium in Phnom Penh yesterday to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the expulsion of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime – a day Prime Minister Hun Sen called the country’s “second birthday”.

The ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, installed a reign of terror in 1975 that left two million Cambodians dead from starvation, hard labour, torture and mass executions. It ended on Jan 7, 1979, when Mr Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge cadre, led Vietnamese forces into the capital to expel the murderous regime.

The 66-year-old Prime Minister hailed the day as Cambodia’s “second birthday” at an elaborate ceremony in Phnom Penh’s Olympic

Stadium, where he was joined by traditional Khmer apsara dancers and marching bands.

“Today, we celebrate this ceremony in order to recall unforgettably memories of the most heinous crimes of Pol Pot’s group,” Mr Hun Sen told the crowd, and thanked Vietnam for saving the country.

A United Nations-backed tribunal found two top Khmer Rouge leaders guilty of genocide in a landmark ruling last November.

The feisty Premier – who has been ruling the country for 33 years – also took the opportunity to revisit history, hitting back at countries that continued supporting the Khmer Rouge after its ouster.

“These countries... boasted about humanitarian and human rights and democracy (but) unjustly blocked

(the way)” when the people needed assistance from the international community, he said, without naming any specific nation.

After the Khmer Rouge regime was toppled in 1979, Mr Hun Sen found his Vietnam-backed government caught between geopolitical forces as the United States sought to keep the ousted Khmer Rouge at the table at the UN.

The South-east Asian country in recent years has tilted towards China, thanks to loans for infrastructure and few complaints on human rights issues.

In July last year, Mr Hun Sen’s party handily won a much-criticised election, after his government dissolved the country’s main opposition group and jailed its leader – effectively turning Cambodia into a one-party state.

Mr Hun Sen yesterday vowed to “deny the actions of extremist opposition politicians and the foreign circle behind them”, claiming that they were trying to push Cambodia away from a democratic path.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Prime Minister Hun Sen arriving at the event yesterday. The 66-year-old, who has been in power for 33 years, hailed the day as Cambodia’s “second birthday”.

Mr Trump previously said he planned to hold a second meeting with Mr Kim as early as this month, although a date and location have not yet been announced. Other places floated as hosts include Singapore, Mongolia and Switzerland.

Study links green tea with increased risk of Type 2 diabetes

BEIJING • A recent study has found that drinking green tea is associated with an increased risk of Type 2 diabetes in Chinese adults.

Both female and male participants in the study have an increased risk of Type 2 diabetes if they drink more green tea, said researchers from China’s Fudan University, Vanderbilt University in the United States and other re-

search institutions. They noted that this positive and dose-response association between green tea intake and risk of Type 2 diabetes did not vary by obesity or smoking.

In the study, none of the participants had diabetes when they were enrolled. Details of tea-drinking habits, including the types and amounts, were collected in the study.

A total of 119,373 participants from the Shanghai Women’s Health Study and Shanghai Men’s Health Study – two large population-based studies that started in 1996 – were included in the study on green tea intake and risk of Type 2 diabetes.

Data from the two studies have been used to investigate genetic and other biomarkers as well as lifestyle risk factors for cancers and

other chronic diseases.

The researchers called for further studies on the mechanisms underlying the association between drinking green tea and the risk of Type 2 diabetes, suggesting that pesticide residue in tea leaves could play a possible role.

The findings of the study have been reported in the International Journal Of Epidemiology.

Green tea is a popular beverage consumed worldwide. In recent years, it has gained popularity as a health drink. But researchers have had inconsistent findings on the association between green tea drinking and risk of Type 2 diabetes.

A Japanese study published in the Annals Of Internal Medicine in 2006 said habitual green tea drinkers who drank at least six cups

per day had a 33 per cent lower risk for Type 2 diabetes than those who drank one cup or less per week.

A study in South Korea published in the journal of BioFactors in 2007 said that people with diabetes should drink less green tea as animal studies had shown that high green tea intake may increase blood sugar levels in diabetic rats. XINHUA

Jokowi's running mate offers Ahok olive branch

Ma'ruf's statement of regret for testifying against former Jakarta governor seen as bid to appease minority voters

Linda Yulisman
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

A recent statement of regret issued by Indonesian vice-presidential candidate Ma'ruf Amin for testifying against former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama in a blasphemy case has paved the way for a reconciliation between the two, with analysts viewing it as a political move to appease pluralists.

In a 48-second interview with a local media outlet which went viral last week, the 75-year-old conservative cleric, formerly chairman of the influential Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), admitted that he was made to give the testimony as part of law enforcement.

Mr Ma'ruf, the running mate of President Joko Widodo in polls set for April, was a key prosecution witness in a case that led to the imprisonment of Basuki, popularly known by his Chinese nickname Ahok, on the grounds that he had insulted the Quran.

Indonesian Institute of Sciences socio-political researcher Amin Mudzakir said Mr Ma'ruf's recent statement has served as a precondition to a reconciliation with Basuki on his expected release from jail on Jan 24. He underlined the statement's political nature, saying it is aimed at attracting voters from minority groups, particularly Basuki's supporters.

"If Ahok later responds to Ma'ruf positively, that could be productive for Ma'ruf's campaign," Mr Amin told The Straits Times, adding that the statement needs to be followed by a meeting between the two later, in order to create a stronger effect.

Basuki, Jakarta's first Chinese and Christian governor, was sentenced to two years' jail after a Jakarta court ruled that he was guilty of blasphemy against Islam in May 2017, just weeks after he lost the Jakarta gubernatorial election to his rival, former culture and education minister Anies Baswedan.

Basuki's early release took into account remission that he received over the Christmas holidays.

Political analyst Arya Fernandes from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies said Mr Ma'ruf's statement is a political move based on electoral considerations as he does not want to lose votes from minority groups and Basuki's backers.

"Minority groups are waiting to see Mr Ma'ruf's further commitment on pluralism because Ahok's case showed his different stance," Mr Arya said. "The statement is to comfort the minority."

During his tenure as MUI chairman, Mr Ma'ruf supported controversial regulations, like a ministerial decree that bans religious activities of Ahmadiyah followers, and issued unfavourable recommendations, including one suggesting that Muslims do not congratulate



Analysts said the statement by Mr Ma'ruf Amin (above), who is the running mate of President Joko Widodo in polls set for April, is aimed at attracting voters from minority groups. ST FILE PHOTO

Christians celebrating Christmas.

The decision by Mr Joko, a reform-minded leader, to pick Mr Ma'ruf as his partner in his re-election bid is seen by many as a way to boost his Islamic credentials – and temper his image of being anti-Islam – in the country with the world's biggest Muslim population.

Mr Arya, however, noted that the impact of the statement on the electability of the Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin pair is likely to be insignificant as there has been no

notable change in Mr Joko's popularity among voters after he declared his intention to team up with Mr Ma'ruf in August last year.

Mr Ma'ruf should focus on attracting Muslim voters, especially in areas with large Muslim populations yet to be tapped successfully, said Mr Arya, adding: "Mr Ma'ruf must be cautious about such a statement as it can get adverse interpretations from Muslim groups."

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Suu Kyi tells military to crush Rakhine rebels

YANGON • Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi discussed insurgent attacks on police yesterday in a rare meeting with the military chief, and her administration called for the armed forces to "crush" the rebels, a government spokesman said.

Myanmar government spokesman Zaw Htay said Ms Suu Kyi, President Win Myint and other Cabinet members met military leaders, including army chief Min Aung Hlaing, his deputy and the military intelligence chief, to discuss "foreign affairs and national security".

The insurgents killed 13 policemen and wounded nine in attacks on four police posts last Friday, as Myanmar celebrated Independence Day, state media reported.

"The President's office has instructed the military to launch an operation to crush the terrorists," Mr Zaw Htay told a news conference in the capital, Naypyitaw.

Fighting between government forces and the rebel Arakan Army in the western state of Rakhine has displaced thousands of people since early last month, according to the United Nations.

The Arakan Army wants greater autonomy for Rakhine, where the mainly Buddhist Rakhine ethnic group makes up the majority of the population.

An Arakan Army spokesman outside Myanmar told Reuters last week that the group attacked the security forces in response to a broad military offensive in northern Rakhine state that also targeted civilians.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said yesterday that 4,500 people were sheltering in monasteries and communal spaces after being displaced by the fighting in the past month.

Mr Zaw Htay described the Arakan Army as a "terrorist organisation" and said it had surprised security forces on guard against Rohingya insurgents.

He said the Arakan Army could destabilise Rakhine for years to come and warned people not to give it support.

Mr Zaw Htay also accused the Arakan Army of meeting the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, a group of Rohingya insurgents that Myanmar also considers terrorists, but added that Myanmar was unable to eliminate the groups as they had bases across the border in Bangladesh.

A Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry official and two Border Guards Bangladesh officers denied the accusation.

The Myanmar government and military leaders also discussed a temporary ceasefire the military announced last month in other parts of the country, where other insurgent groups operate, Mr Zaw Htay said. REUTERS

Hasina sworn in as Bangladesh PM for 4th term

DHAKA • Ms Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Bangladesh's Prime Minister for a record fourth term yesterday after a crushing election victory marred by deadly violence and claims of widespread rigging.

Ms Hasina, 71, has presided over record economic growth in the South Asian country of 165 million people but critics have accused her of creeping authoritarianism.

Her ruling Awami League party and its allies won the Dec 30 elections by a landslide, securing 288 seats in the 300-seat Parliament compared with just seven for the main opposition.

The campaign saw mass arrests of opposition activists and candidates, and allegations of widespread rigging, including ballot stuffing and voter intimidation. Seventeen people were killed on election day.

The European Union has called for a probe into allegations of irregularities, while the United Nations

last Friday said there were indications that "reprisals" have targeted the opposition since the election, including physical attacks, arbitrary arrests, harassment, disappearances and filing of criminal cases.

The opposition, which last week boycotted the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected MPs, has demanded fresh polls under a neutral caretaker government – something Ms Hasina and the election commission have rejected outright.

President Abdul Hamid administered Ms Hasina's oath in a ceremony at the presidential palace Bangabhaban. A 47-member Cabinet with many new faces was also sworn in.

To her supporters, Ms Hasina is known as Bangladesh's "mother of humanity" for allowing in hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing a military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017.

Opponents accuse her of jailing archfoe Khaleda Zia on politically



Ms Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League party and its allies won 288 seats in the 300-seat Parliament. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

motivated charges, of orchestrating mass arrests, enforced disappearances and passing draconian anti-press freedom laws to try to cling to power.

Ms Hasina was abroad in August 1975 when a group of renegade military officers assassinated her father, Bangladesh's first president, Mr Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She returned from exile in 1981 to take over as Awami League leader, later joining forces with Ms Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party to help oust military dictator Hussain Muhammad Ershad in 1990.

But the pair soon fell out and their rivalry has dominated Bangladeshi politics for the last 30 years.

Ms Hasina was first elected prime minister in 1996 but she struggled to emerge from the shadow of her father during her first term and lost the 2001 contest.

She returned to power after winning the December 2008 polls by a landslide, just months after she was imprisoned by a military-backed government on corruption charges.

She has been in power ever since, presiding over economic expansion of more than 6 per cent every year since 2009. Gross domestic product growth last year was 7.86 per cent and Ms Hasina has promised to take that into double digits. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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News analysis

With Romania at helm, EU is moving in rough waters

For 6 months, a politically fragile and populist govt heads the bloc



Markus Ziener

Global Affairs Correspondent

The Romanian presidency of the European Union could not have come at a more critical moment.

With Brexit looming and the elections of the European Parliament scheduled for May, a strong and decidedly pro-European chairmanship is needed to steer the embattled institution through rough waters.

The reality, however, looks much different.

With Romania in charge for the next six months, a politically fragile and rather populist government is at the helm of the EU. Worries are running high that already existing troubles now could even expand.

As a rule, every half-year, the presidency of the European Union switches from one member country to another. The order is determined years in advance.

However, due to the possible departure of the United Kingdom, London waived its presidency in the second half of 2017 and the chronological order was moved up.

As a result, Romania, which joined the EU in 2007 and has so far never held the presidency, took over this month.

In quieter periods the importance of the presidency is limited, but it is a different matter in times of crisis.



Victoria Palace – the Romanian government headquarters – with the flags of Romania (left) and European Union projected on its facade to mark the country's EU presidency for half a year from this month. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

The government in charge is not only setting the agenda for summits and conferences, it also has to table compromises during conflicts among member states.

In the past, very often it has come down to the skills of the presidency to avert major rifts within the EU.

There is now significant doubt as to whether Bucharest is able to handle this challenge.

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the EU Commission, only days before the handover said in an interview that he believes “Bucharest has not yet fully understood what it means to preside over EU countries”.

Mr Juncker was alluding to a domestic battle which Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and the government led by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) have been embroiled in for two years.

High-ranking members of the government are facing corruption

charges and the PSD is trying to roll back legislation that could see them put behind bars.

Mr Iohannis, a politician of German descent, has more than once foiled the PSD's efforts.

However, since his tenure is due to end in December this year and his re-election is in doubt, it is unlikely that the PSD will give in.

Mr Iohannis' main opponent is Mr Liviu Dragnea, the chairman of the PSD, who is under investigation by the Romanian Attorney-General for having allegedly built a massive corruption scheme. So far the charges have prevented Mr Dragnea from becoming prime minister.

In his place, Ms Viorica Dancila – a loyal supporter of Mr Dragnea – is currently leading the government.

An attempt by the government to fire the Attorney-General was recently thwarted by Mr Iohannis.

Observers interpret this as

another sign that the constant infighting in Romania will continue and overshadow the EU presidency.

In response to EU concerns over Romania's ability to effectively run the presidency, Bucharest has claimed that Brussels bears a grudge against eastern Europeans in general.

With this narrative, Romania is trying to elevate the internal brawl to a higher level which is much more delicate to address.

A number of eastern European member states, once eager to join the EU, are at odds with Brussels. As well as Hungary and Poland, the Slovak government and Romania are following a different line.

Notwithstanding some bitter controversies over immigration policies, eastern European

countries are increasingly averse to accepting EU standards – whether the rule of law, freedom of media or independence of key institutions.

Those countries tend to portray their resistance as an act of emancipation from the EU, with some comparing it to the years of Moscow's patronage over its neighbours.

New members from eastern Europe have been regularly monitored and graded by the EU as to whether they in fact fulfil the admission criteria.

If any EU country is not adhering to the rules, legal proceedings can be initiated.

Poland, because of its arbitrary changes regarding the appointment of members of the Supreme Court, has already come into the cross hairs of Brussels.

In November, Romania was subjected to a critical resolution by the European Parliament due to similar charges.

After many decades living under the Soviet thumb, it is relatively easy for populist leaders in eastern Europe to stir anger – and direct frustration against Brussels.

Upon joining the EU, expectations at that time were running high that people's lives would improve almost immediately.

It turned out, however, that there is still a long way to go to make eastern European economies competitive and to root out the difficult legacies of the past – like corruption and nepotism.

Even though this autumn, it will be 30 years since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the adjustment process is far from being completed.

Romania is a particularly complicated case.

After the communist regime under President Nicolae Ceausescu was brutally swept away in December 1989, a fundamental and thorough reboot of the Romanian society did not take place until much later.

For years, former communists like President Ion Iliescu were running the country.

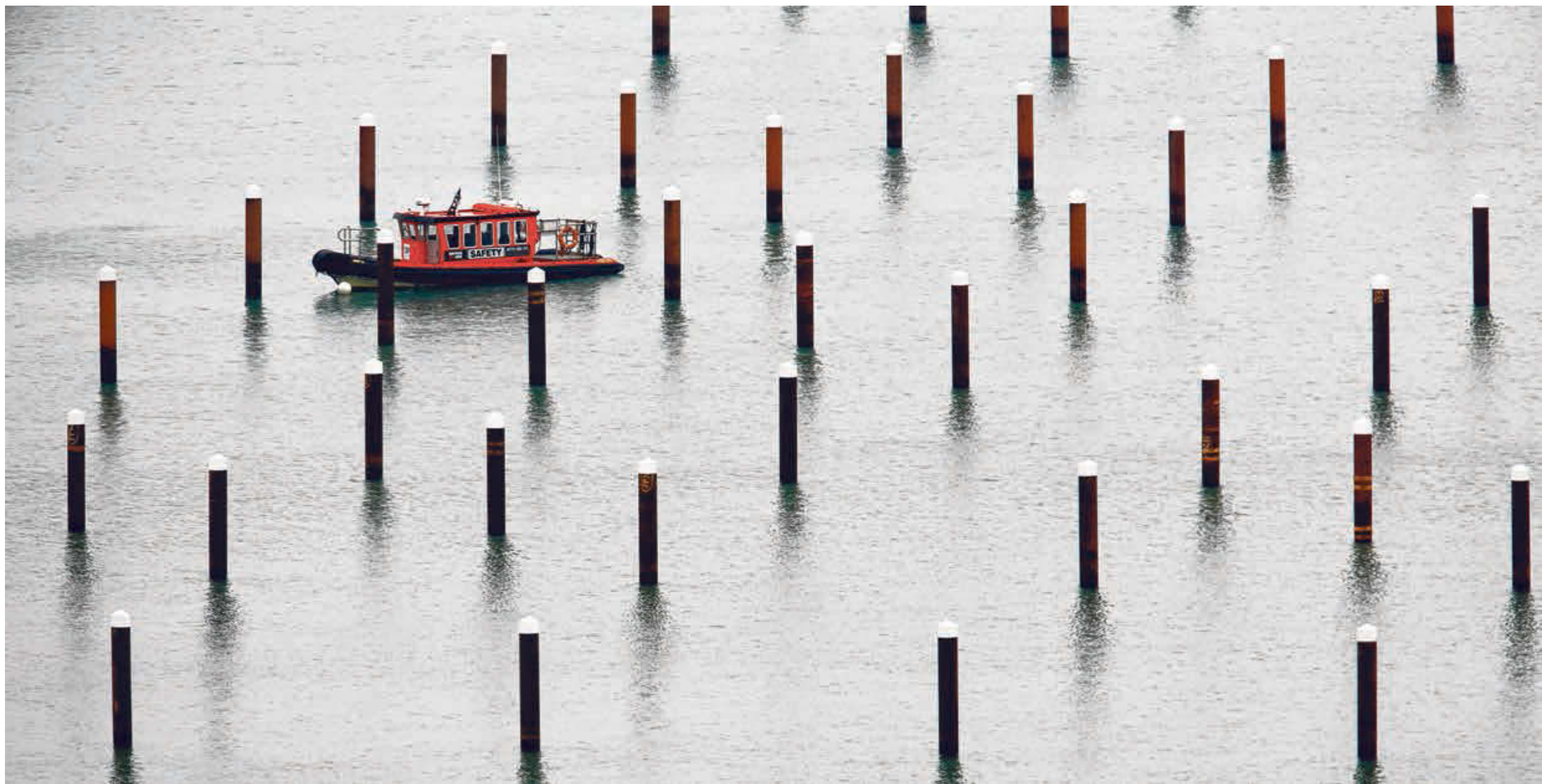
Even the current Social Democrats have their origin in the dissolved communist party – and are Social Democrats in name only.

For Brussels, at least there is a glimmer of hope: Together with the two countries following in the presidency, Romania has to form a so called “troika”.

The three countries are supposed to consult closely.

Finland and Croatia, the countries next in line, therefore, may try to moderate a Romanian presidency that is likely to be rather turbulent.

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A safety craft manoeuvring its way among pilings at Dover Marina in Britain last Saturday. The port, which operates 120 ferries a day carrying 10,000 lorries, accounts for 17 per cent of Britain's trade in goods. As part of a government exercise yesterday to test how traffic might flow around south-east England in the event of a no-deal Brexit, nearly 100 lorries made two trips to and from Dover along a route far less used by them than the main highway from London. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Opposition Labour set to back bid for extra barrier to no-deal Brexit

LONDON • Britain's main opposition Labour Party is expected to back a proposal today that could mean the government needs parliamentary approval for a no-deal Brexit, putting up a new hurdle for Prime Minister Theresa May.

Britain is due to leave the European Union on March 29, but the deal Prime Minister May has negotiated with the bloc looks unlikely to be approved by lawmakers in its current form, generating huge uncertainty about the path of the world's

fifth-largest economy.

Preparations for leaving without a deal – the default scenario if Mrs May's agreement is rejected – have been ramped up, with government and businesses activating and testing contingency plans designed to limit the expected disruption.

That has prompted a group of lawmakers from across the political spectrum to come up with a plan to try to win Parliament the authority to prevent a no-deal exit by amending legislation. The plan, if success-

ful, would mean that Parliament would need to explicitly approve a no-deal exit before the government could exercise certain powers it would need to implement one.

The amendment to a Bill that is designed to implement the Budget and gives the government the authority to keep its tax-raising powers intact after Brexit could be put before Parliament today if it is chosen by the Speaker.

Tax is just one in a long list of areas in which the government needs

to make changes to legislation to disentangle UK from the EU after more than 40 years of membership.

Meanwhile, a record low of just 18 per cent of British voters think Mrs May has got the right Brexit deal, an ORB poll published yesterday showed.

When asked if they were confident that Mrs May had the right deal, 59 per cent disagreed, 21 per cent said they did not know and 18 per cent agreed, the lowest level ever recorded by the poll, which has

been monitoring views of her negotiation since 2016. The poll, which has been carried out monthly since the end of 2016, surveyed 2,000 adults in the United Kingdom.

A Labour source said the party was expected to vote in favour of the amendment to the Bill.

Because Mrs May does not have an outright majority in Parliament to rely upon, and her own Conservative Party is split over Brexit, Labour's support would give the amendment a chance of passing if

enough Tories also support it.

It would not be an outright block on Britain leaving without a deal, but would create both a political and technical headache for the government.

“Practically, it constrains the government's ability to do certain things if a no deal happens. What it doesn't do is stop no deal,” said Mr Joe Owen, associate director of the Brexit programme at the Institute for Government think-tank. REUTERS

US border security claim hits wall of reality

Data shows illegal immigrants' crime rate not exceptionally high, contrary to White House view

Nirmal Ghosh
US Bureau Chief
In Washington

Amid the skirl of a single bagpipe in a cold thin drizzle in Modesto, California, last Saturday, the body of 33-year-old police officer Ronil Singh was cremated after a sombre memorial service.

The day after Christmas, Corporal Singh was shot dead after stopping a suspected drunk driver, a man from Mexico involved in gangs. The man was an illegal immigrant who had been living in the United States after crossing the border through the Arizona desert.

While the incident seems to support the White House's narrative of criminal illegal aliens infiltrating the US from across its southern border, the facts on the ground often present a different story.

The issue of illegal immigration, in particular relating to the building of a wall on the US border with Mexico, has come to the fore as President Donald Trump tries to leverage a partial federal government shutdown to get funding for the wall.

The President, boxed in by his promise to his base, says the wall is a national security issue. Criminals and even terrorists, some from countries in the Middle East, come with the illegal immigrants, he claims. Ninety per cent of the heroin in the US comes across the southern border, the White House says.

"It's not just illegals," Mr Trump told journalists on Sunday. "It's criminals. It's drugs. It's the new phe-

nomenon that's been age-old, been going on for thousands of years, but it's never been worse than now because of the Internet."

But if Mr Trump cites national security in declaring a state of emergency – and orders the wall built – that will be challenged legally, and the argument would have to add up.

Drugs are certainly a major issue. That the vast majority of heroin in the US comes across the southern border is correct. And the flow has increased.

"Mexico and, to a lesser extent, Colombia dominate the US heroin market because of their proximity, established transport and distribution infrastructure, and ability to satisfy US heroin demand," said the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in a 2015 report.

Mexico's production of opium more than trebled between 2013 and 2016, said the DEA in a 2017 report. Opium is used to make heroin.

In 2017, more than 15,000 people died from drug overdoses involving heroin – almost five deaths for every 100,000 Americans.

But when it comes to criminality, there is a gap between perception and reality.

Studying 2015 figures for Texas, a border state, the Cato Institute concluded last year that "as a percentage of their respective populations, there were 56 per cent fewer criminal convictions of illegal immigrants than of native-born Americans in Texas in 2015".

Thus among illegal immigrants, the crime rate is not exceptionally high. And crime in border regions is not uncommon anyway – more so in regions with miles of open borders and criminal cartels involved in transnational organised crime, said Dr Vanda Felbab-Brown, an expert on organised crime at the Brookings Institution.

A House committee report on "special interest aliens" released last week raises more questions than it answers. The report, produced under Republican leadership, appears to have been rushed out as the House changed hands from a Republican to a Democratic majority. It said recent migrant caravans originating in Central America had included "several (special interest aliens), and potentially known or suspected terrorists travelling towards the US border".

Written materials and publications by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria group had also encouraged its followers to cross the US south-west border, the report said.

US Border Patrol agents routinely encountered special interest aliens at the border who use routes controlled by transnational criminal organisations, said the report, but it did not cite actual data.

In any case, the term "special interest aliens" is applied to countries that have produced terrorists; it does not mean those identified as such are criminals or terrorists.

Pressed to substantiate claims of terrorists infiltrating the US from the southern border in a Fox News interview with host Chris Wallace on Sunday, White House spokesman Sarah Sanders was essentially unable to do so.

Dr Felbab-Brown said it is true that people from the Middle East,

including Syria and Iraq, have tried to get into the US through the Mexico border to try to claim asylum.

"But the reality is that there has never been any attempted terrorist attack (from) across the southern border," she said. "Yes, people of Middle Eastern origin have come across the southern border, and they have either been detained or they have claimed asylum. There has never been a discovered, identified, plan of attack."

Noting that no border is ever completely sealed, Dr Felbab-Brown said: "But two things are significant. The majority of terrorist attacks in the US in 2018 have been by white people killing people in the name of ideology or anti-Semitism."

She noted that of all the attacks planned or carried out, not a single one since the Sept 11, 2001, attacks and before that had anything to do with the Mexico border.

"And the vast majority of violent crimes in the US are committed by native-born Americans," she added.

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A police officer speaking last Saturday at the funeral service of Corporal Ronil Singh, who was shot dead after stopping a suspected drunk driver, a man from Mexico linked to gangs. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Queensland beaches closed after thousands stung by jellyfish

SYDNEY • Highly venomous jellyfish have stung more than three thousand people on Australia's north-eastern shores in just a few days, the authorities said yesterday, forcing the closure of several beaches.

The massive influx of Portuguese man-of-war jellyfish, whose stings are notoriously painful, has been described as an "invasion" by local media in the state of Queensland.

Coastguard association Surf Life Saving said a "whopping" 3,595 people had suffered painful burns after encounters with the creatures, also known as bluebottles for their transparent bluish appearance.

At least four major beaches remained closed as the organisation

warned that even more jellyfish were on their way.

"A wall of bluebottles is approaching #Rainbow beach. Lifesavers are closing the beach. Please stay out of the water," read one of several warnings from Surf Life Saving.

Bluebottle stings are a frequent occurrence and it is not uncommon to hear howls of pain from changing rooms along Australia's eastern beaches during the southern hemisphere's summer.

But the sheer number of people stung in the last few days has surprised the authorities.

There are usually around 10,000 cases of bluebottle stings each year on the east coast of Australia, according to the Royal Australian College

The extraordinary number of stings in the last few days has occurred as strong onshore winds have come in from the north-east, bringing the creatures into contact with swimmers.

of General Practitioners.

The extraordinary number of stings in the last few days has occurred as strong onshore winds have come in from the north-east,

bringing the creatures into contact with swimmers.

The doctors' group describes the symptoms of a sting as an "immediate sharp pain and acute inflammatory skin reaction".

"The intense skin pain can last from minutes to many hours... The sting can also cause systemic signs such as nausea, vomiting and a general feeling of malaise."

Treatment includes rinsing the wound with water at 45 deg C or using ice packs.

It is less straightforward to treat stings from the fearsome Irukandji variety of jellyfish, however.

Stings from these box jellyfish can cause acute muscular pain, violent vomiting, feelings of "impending doom", hair that stands on end, strokes, heart failure and death within minutes.

Broadcaster ABC reported that the number of people taken to hospital with Irukandji stings in Queensland this season is already 20, double the normal yearly average. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Trump security adviser rolls back Syria pullout plan

WASHINGTON • President Donald Trump's national security adviser, Mr John Bolton, has rolled back Mr Trump's decision to rapidly withdraw from Syria, laying out conditions for a pullout that could leave US forces there for months or even years.

Mr Bolton, making a visit to Israel, told reporters that US forces would remain in Syria until the last remnants of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group were defeated and Turkey provided guarantees that it would not strike Kurdish forces allied with the United States.

He and other top White House advisers have led a behind-the-scenes effort to slow Mr Trump's order and reassure allies, including Israel.

"We don't think the Turks ought to undertake military action that's not fully coordinated with and agreed to by the United States, at a minimum, so they don't endanger our troops," Mr Bolton said in Jerusalem, where he was travelling before a visit today to Turkey.

Mr Bolton's comments inserted into Mr Trump's strategy something that the President had omitted when he announced on Dec 19 that the United States would depart within 30 days: Any conditions that must be met before the pullout.

The remarks also reflected the disarray that has surrounded the President's decision, which took his staff and foreign allies by surprise and drew objections from the Pentagon that it was logistically impossible and strategically unwise.

Defence Secretary James Mattis resigned within hours of the announcement, and the Pentagon

chief of staff, Mr Kevin Sweeney, said last Saturday evening that he was also leaving.

While Mr Bolton said on Sunday that he expected US forces to eventually leave north-eastern Syria, where most of the 2,000 troops in the country are based for the mission against ISIS, he began to lay out an argument for keeping some troops at a garrison in the south-east that is used to monitor the flow of Iranian arms and soldiers.

The move to reverse course on Mr Trump's promised swift withdrawal picked up in recent days even as Mr Bolton worked to avoid openly confronting the President the way Mr Mattis did.

Asked about the shifting timeline on Sunday as he left the White House for meetings about border security at Camp David, Mr Trump told reporters that he had "never said we were doing it that quickly".

In a video on the evening of his announcement last month, he had said that "our boys, our young women, our men – they're all coming back, and they're coming back now", though he later extended that to four months.

Now, the four-month schedule appears highly in doubt.

The conditions Mr Bolton described, including the complete defeat of ISIS and the guarantees from Turkey, could easily stretch out.

Mr Bolton will meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan today. Turkey's leader argued with Mr Trump in a phone call last month that ISIS had been defeated, and that US troops were therefore no longer needed to aid Kurdish fighters. NYTIMES

10-year-old set to be youngest pro Go player

TOKYO • Japan's Sumire Nakamura will become the youngest professional player of the ancient board game Go when she makes her debut as a 10-year-old on April 1.

Sumire, who turns 10 on March 2, local media said, started playing the game with her father, when she was three.

The previous youngest player was Rina Fujisawa, who was 11 when she turned professional in 2010.

Presented to the media last Saturday standing next to her father, Mr Shinya Nakamura, a national champion, Sumire said she was keen to get her first trophy.

"I feel happy when I win," said Sumire, who currently goes to school in Osaka. "I want to win a title while I am in junior high school."

Her father was surprised at how quickly she entered the pro ranks. "I didn't expect she will be professional this soon," he said. "I think she was able to achieve this thanks to teachers who have taught her how to play Go and people that have supported her."

Go, most popular in East Asia, involves two players moving black and white stones across a square grid, aiming to seize the most territory. Its origins are said to date back thousands of years. REUTERS



Sumire Nakamura playing against Mr Yuta Iyama in Osaka on Sunday. Sumire started playing Go with her father, national champion Shinya Nakamura, when she was three. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

THE STRAITS TIMES

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Firmer steps in the anti-smoking fight

Singapore and Malaysia began the new year by taking some significant steps against smoking. Here, a ban in the Orchard Road precinct kicked in, prohibiting smokers from lighting up in public areas except within designated spaces. The same day, the minimum legal age for smoking went up from 18 to 19. The age will be raised progressively every January until 2021, when smokers will have to be at least 21. Across the Causeway, a nationwide ban on smoking in public places has gained more teeth with the inclusion of all eateries and restaurants. Hefty fines and even imprisonment await smokers who flout the law there. Business owners, too, face deterrent punishment.

The seriousness with which the authorities

view smoking, once considered a harmless pastime, is not in doubt. Smoking causes a range of diseases and saps both the physical and economic vitality of the addicted. According to the World Health Organisation, tobacco kills up to half of its users – a useful reminder for those who believe that untimely death awaits only a minority of users. Tobacco kills more than seven million people each year. More than six million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use, while about 890,000 are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke.

For those who believe in an egalitarian world where the risks and benefits of bad habits will be shared equitably, it is a sobering fact that around

80 per cent of the world's 1.1 billion smokers live in low- and middle-income countries. In other words, the nations that are least equipped to handle the medical cost of treating smoking-related diseases are burdened with the highest proportion of smokers. Passive smokers are double victims. Although they do not puff, they have to pick up the cost of a callous practice, a cost borne personally through ill-health or through taxes paid to treat smokers in the public health system. Much as law-abiding citizens have a right to crime-free neighbourhoods, non-smokers would also argue that they deserve public spaces that do not endanger them. Smoking is a social ill that can be prevented through a combination of measures.

Constricting the ambit of spaces where smoking is permitted is an obvious measure, but it is not the only one. Countries could consider raising levies on tobacco to prohibitive levels, banning tobacco advertising completely, and stopping tobacco companies from sponsoring events that attract youth in particular. Smoking needs to be delegitimised as a personal choice and a social activity. Parents, peers, schools, companies and society at large can work to dissuade young people from picking up what is an unnecessary, expensive and potentially ruinous habit. The approach being taken by Singapore and Malaysia could contribute to efforts in Asean and elsewhere to come down hard on a habit that many fume about.

By Invitation

The twin transitions that will shape Thailand's future

Fresh elections and a new monarch are key to how the kingdom finds its way in a changed political landscape



Thitinan Pongsudhirak

For The Straits Times

Thailand's much-anticipated twin transitions are under way.

One is the long-awaited election, which has been tentatively rescheduled for March, after five postponements in nearly five years of military government since a coup in May 2014.

The other is King Maha Vajiralongkorn's coronation, which will take place on May 4.

These two events may appear disparate at first sight. But they are, in fact, intertwined, reflecting Thailand's status as both a democracy and a kingdom under a constitutional monarchy and having a bearing on the continuing evolution of Thai national politics.

In the short term, they will likely affect the country's chairmanship of Asean this year because of the inherent political uncertainty in the coming months and the demands on the time and resources of the government.

PRAYUT'S POLITICAL DEFENCES

To be sure, the election should already have taken place months ago because the incumbent government of junta leader and Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has, over time, built up a framework of constitutional and administrative bulwarks against civilian-led political parties.

The 2017 Constitution, for instance, allows the junta to practically handpick the 250-member Senate, the appointed Upper House that is poised to function as the largest pro-military bloc in the 750-strong bicameral legislature.

The military's interests are also safeguarded, albeit more indirectly, in how members of the 500-strong Lower House are elected. Election is done via a mix-member system, with MPs voted in as either constituency or party-list representatives. There is room for 350 constituency MPs, with the remaining 150 as party-list members.

The system is designed to preclude the rise of large dominant

parties, such as Pheu Thai and its two predecessors that are aligned with Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister Yingluck, two elected premiers who were overthrown by the military in 2006 and 2014.

How it works is that the more successful a party is in garnering constituency winners, the poorer its chances in gaining a share of the 150 party-list seats as votes for losing constituency candidates will be counted and distributed among their parties. Unsurprisingly, several dozen new and smaller parties have sprung up to capture these party-list seats. Pheu Thai, for example, has spawned smaller proxies in the Thai Raksa Chart and Pheu Dharma parties.

According to latest polls and anecdotal reports from the ground, this pro-Thaksin parliamentary front is still on course to emerge as the largest winning bloc. While its two affiliates are gunning for a sizeable share of party-list seats, Pheu Thai remains the front runner in the race for constituency seats. It has kept up the momentum under the leadership of Ms Sudarat Keyuraphan and the charismatic and the widely popular Mr Chatchart Sithippan, a former transport minister in the Yingluck government.

Yet with the current constitutional rules that allow the Senate to vote in the national assembly's selection of the prime minister by a simple majority, the pro-Thaksin parties are unlikely to gather the required 376 MPs, even with support from anti-junta allies, such as the progressive and youthful Future Forward Party.

The rules are thus stacked in favour of the junta and for Mr Prayut to return as premier after the election.

The revised Constitution is clearly aimed at maintaining military supervision of Thai politics over the long term, particularly through the promulgation of a junta-designed "20-year strategic development plan", which future elected governments must adhere to by law.

In addition, key state agencies, such as the Election Commission and the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), have been filled by junta loyalists. The NACC made headlines around the world last month when it cleared Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan of corruption in a major scandal. Dubbed the "Rolex General", he was under probe for possessing over 20 expensive wristwatches worth more than US\$1 million (\$\$1.36 million), a sum beyond his



official pay. He argued that these were on loan to him by a dead friend.

Mr Prayut also has immense law-making power through Article 44 of the Constitution, which empowers him to issue unilateral decrees as he and the government deem fit. This legal tool was initially seen as necessary to maintain national security after the coup, but it has since been wielded controversially in the firing and demotion of senior officials as well as in banning villagers from riding in the backs of pick-up trucks.

Laws aside, Mr Prayut has also gone to great lengths to put in

place the necessary party machinery for election victory.

The junta has its own political party, the Palang Pracharat, a name identical to the government's populist policy programme in favour of the rural electorate.

Palang Pracharat is led by four sitting ministers and has benefited directly from government largesse, enabling it to offer pork-barrel projects and freebies in the populous north-east and north to the tune of several billion dollars.

ELECTORAL UNCERTAINTIES

Yet it is not popular, posing a

problem for Mr Prayut, who is forced to wait and watch how it performs before joining the party.

If he does bite the bullet and takes over Palang Pracharat's helm, theoretically all he needs is just 126 MPs to head a new government, assuming that he has in the bag the support of the Senate and smaller pro-military parties such as Action Coalition for Thailand.

But such is the poor showing of Palang Pracharat that Mr Prayut is not even confident of getting enough seats to return him to power without additional help from the likes of the Bhujaithai,

Chart Thai Pattana and Democrat parties. The Democrats are a wild card. As the main parliamentary opposition throughout the Thaksin/Yingluck years, the Democrat Party appears anti-junta but, if it wins more seats than Palang Pracharat, it could lead a coalition government that includes pro-military parties – unlike the Pheu Thai-led side, which squarely opposes a military presence in Parliament.

All these uncertainties point to a lack of political clarity for Thailand even if the election goes ahead.

It is possible that pro-military parties may scrape together enough MP numbers to return Mr Prayut to power but he will have a difficult time governing, as legislation will be led by the Lower House, with the Senate playing a more nominal role.

Civil-military relations are also likely to shift dramatically after the election. As civilian leaders and elected representatives regain power, the junta and its loyalists and supporters will be on the back foot.

In the process, Thailand will likely spend the next two years trying to undo and redress the misrule and mistakes from the junta era, potentially putting itself through yet another cycle of coup, Constitution changes and fresh elections.

In the near term, Thailand will be too caught up with its domestic political problems to live up to its full potential as Asean chair.

MONARCHY'S ROLE

What's noteworthy this time round is that should Thailand go through yet another coup cycle, its trajectory and outcome will be greatly influenced by a fresh factor – the new king.

How things work out will depend on the role of the monarchy and its relationship with the political forces mandated by the Constitution.

Under the previous reign, which lasted over seven decades, power coalesced around the military, monarchy and bureaucracy. This arrangement was effective and successful in thwarting communist expansionism and enabling economic development, but was marred in its twilight years by political conflict and polarisation.

Unlike the last reign, which was forged by Cold War exigencies, the new era under King Vajiralongkorn faces international norms and domestic expectations that demand a recalibration of the monarchy within a constitutional order that a more politically informed and conscious electorate can live with.

Therein lies the challenge for Thailand – after two wasted decades of virtual political standstill, it has the opportunity to forge ahead again under a new reign and with new elections.

And yet as it heads into two momentous transitions of power, it is still seeking a new balance, struggling to find a way to reconcile the political order that has been passed on from the previous reign with a changed environment in the 21st century, where democracy cannot be denied.

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The fading of the US multinational lobby

Edward Luce

It used to be said that what was good for General Motors was good for America.

United States President Donald Trump's administration believes that what is bad for Apple is bad for China. Which means it is good for America.

When Apple's iPhone sales undershoot, as they did last week, China suffers. Or so the theory goes. In practice, the Chinese have been switching to smartphones made by Huawei, the domestic telecoms company, which may help China. But that is beside the point. What is bad for some of America's biggest brands is apparently good for its President.

It is hard to overstate the departure from how US presidents normally behave. Yet the clout of the most powerful US business lobbies was in decline before Mr Trump took the job. He has only crystallised this.

Groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable complain loudly about Mr Trump's immigration crackdown, his tariff wars and government shutdowns. The White House pays scant attention.

Theirs was a Faustian bargain. Business pocketed Mr Trump's

corporate tax cut last year and the rolling deregulation. They must swallow the rest.

It is not as though Mr Trump lacks business friends. But they differ from the traditional crowd. Almost none run publicly listed companies. They tend to be property developers, private equity billionaires, casino magnates and heads of family-owned companies. They swim in different waters from C-suite executives.

Many are based in middle America and cater to a purely domestic market. They are little affected by the tariff wars Mr Trump has unleashed, nor do they worry about public relations.

Apple and Nike may oppose a US state when it bans transgender bathrooms or restricts gay rights. Their stakeholder reputation demands it. America's multinational companies remain staunch internationalists. Mr Trump's friends are nationalist-populists. Diversity and inclusion are not obligatory.

An increasing share of US capital nowadays is going to private companies. Over the last two decades, the number of US-listed companies has almost halved. Initial public offerings are no longer the obvious route for private equity-funded companies. PE firms either hold their stakes for longer or sell them to other private

groups. The rise of the mega-fund, meanwhile, has allowed public companies to go private.

Amazon may have had to go public to reach the US\$1 trillion (\$\$1.36 trillion) valuation it briefly touched last year. It is by no means clear that Uber or WeWork must follow suit.

In each of the last eight years, the amount of equity withdrawn from the US stock market has exceeded the equity raised, a trend known as "de-equitisation". As a result, we have less visibility than we used to on the mindset of US business.

Private companies have much thinner disclosure requirements.

Since they do not need to churn out quarterly earnings reports, many of them are more stable employers. It would be tempting to think that publicly listed companies are more accountable to society. But that does not always seem to be the public's view.

When Harley-Davidson reacted to Mr Trump's tariffs last year by switching production offshore, many of its Wisconsin employees blamed management. The President was standing up for America. Executives were thinking only of their bottom line.

Mr Trump is pushing this tension to its limits. On the one hand, there is shareholder value, which dictates that companies produce wherever is most efficient – in Apple's case, that means anywhere

but America. These groups fly the global flag. On the other hand are patriotic US businesses, brewing beer in the Midwest or producing steel in North Carolina, which fly the stars and stripes.

In the coming weeks, Mr Trump may escalate his trade war with China. His goal is to force the repatriation of production, such as that of iPhones. Hurting S&P 500 companies, which derive almost half of their revenues from overseas, is a price Mr Trump seems willing to pay.

The Chamber of Commerce may complain. But the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Federation of Independent Business will applaud.

Mr Trump's friends, meanwhile, are doing very nicely. His Cabinet could hardly be more obliging.

Former coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler now runs the Environmental Protection Agency. The Department of the Interior will be run by former oil industry lobbyist David Bernhardt. And the Department of Health and Human Services is run by former pharmaceutical lobbyist Alex Azar.

Meanwhile, Ms Linda McMahon, the former head of the family-founded WWE wrestling company, heads the Small Business Administration. And Mrs Betsy DeVos, wife of the former chief executive of Amway, one of America's largest private firms, heads the Department of Education. Each comes from a very different business world to Goldman Sachs.

The irony is that Mr Trump still treats the Dow Jones index as a barometer of success. In reality, it reflects far less of the US business picture than it used to.

If tensions with China take another turn for the worse, equity markets will doubtless fall. But business America speaks in many different voices nowadays. No prizes for guessing which ones Mr Trump will be hearing.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Why some people are born to have a beer belly

Faye Flam

It's that time of the year when a middle-aged person's fancy turns to treadmills and diets.

Scientific literature on excess weight and health is expanding along with global waistlines, and yet, it's hard to find a solid, coherent scientific explanation for why some people get fat and others don't, and why some overweight people get Type 2 diabetes and heart disease and others don't.

In the United States, beliefs about fat follow a science-y sounding quasi-religious narrative: Our prehistoric ancestors had to scramble for food, and therefore evolved voracious appetites that we've inherited like original sin.

Only self-control can save us, and the association between fat and disease goes without question; it is seen as punishment for the sins of gluttony and sloth.

This narrative acknowledges evolution, but it's not real evolutionary biology.

Last week, however, a real evolutionary biologist published a sweeping picture of human fat and health in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

While traditional medical research tends to make very narrow hypotheses and test them with specific data, evolutionary biology often works as an observational science, seeking patterns that tie together and explain lots of diverse observations and measurements. Think Charles Darwin, or the Big Bang theory in cosmology.

Biologist Mary Jane West-Eberhard of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Costa Rica has focused her work on understanding biological variation.

Sometimes individuals with the same genes can show dramatic differences; a queen bee and her workers share the same genes but very different fates. A butterfly born at one time of year may live many times longer than those born in other seasons. Some fish can even change sex in response to changes in the environment.

Dr West-Eberhard proposes that the same biological principle can explain why humans come in quite different shapes.

Some people put on so-called visceral fat, surrounding vital organs, while others put on so-called subcutaneous fat on the limbs, hips and elsewhere. This makes a big difference in health because recent studies show it's the visceral fat that's associated with Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Because Dr West-Eberhard is interested in the functions of things, she looked into visceral fat – also known as the omentum, a part of the immune system. It wraps around the vital organs and protects them from infection.

But what's protective early in life can have a downside later.

Our natural immune response often involves inflammation, and that has been associated with Type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease. The omentum, she said, is the Rosetta stone of pathogenic obesity.

Why then do some people get an expanding omentum and others get "curves" or whatever the latest fashion calls attractively placed subcutaneous fat?

Dr West-Eberhard cites other biologists pointing to sexual selection as the driving force in the human tendency to put fat deposits in places where they serve as ornaments. Her analysis of the data suggests that where your fat goes depends on how well fed you were as a foetus.

It's those who are most undernourished in utero – approximated by low birth weight – who are most likely to accumulate visceral fat in the abdomen. Underweight, badly nourished babies are more vulnerable to infection and benefit from the short-term strategy of laying down protective visceral fat.

The pattern is set by epigenetics – chemical changes surrounding the DNA that determine which genes become activated in which tissues.

"The tragic part is that if you look at people who move to urban areas to seek their fortune, they are on a tight budget and will buy these cheap foods that are bad for them," Dr West-Eberhard said.

People whose mothers ate traditional, rural, sometimes sparse diets – people conditioned in utero to develop visceral fat – run into trouble when they move to urban areas and find that the only foods they can afford are full of fructose and cheap oils.

However the species came to be this way, it's becoming clear that humans who tend to put on visceral fat may have to exercise more and maintain a lower weight than other people to remain healthy. It's yet more evidence that life isn't fair.

Distinguishing the kinds of human fat and the way they influence health may explain why scientists can't agree over the value of body mass index (BMI) – which is strictly a measure of your mass relative to your height.

One widely publicised analysis out of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention showed that an "overweight" BMI is not associated with increased mortality; BMI had to be considerably obese before it started to influence health.

Other analyses have contradicted this, leading to more headlines about the dangers of being overweight, but still others have called their methods into question.

Perhaps researchers and doctors fixate on numbers on the scale because they are such an easy measurement. To predict health is much more difficult.

Analyses like Dr West-Eberhard's paper might change the way we see our fellow humans. What makes a person with gorgeous, enviable curves different from someone with an unhealthy-looking gut?

It's not necessarily that one is more "out of shape" or less self-controlled. It's all part of the human story – evolution, epigenetics and the eternal human quest for a better life. BLOOMBERG

Trump's long shutdown risks long-term global damage

Noah Feldman

President Donald Trump in a meeting with congressional Democrats last Friday said he was prepared for the partial government shutdown to continue for months – or even years – if he doesn't get the money he wants for a wall along the Mexican border.

It's not hard to see how that prediction comes true. Both sides have framed the issue such that a victory for one side on funding a border wall entails defeat for the other. Neither side has much incentive to compromise.

Suppose Mr Trump is right. The longest shutdown on record is 21 days, from late December 1995 to early January 1996. What would a much longer shutdown mean for US political life? Judging by public reaction thus far, you might think the answer is, not much.

After all, people have become increasingly inured to Mr Trump's attempts to break established quasi-constitutional customs. Maybe keeping the government open is just another unwritten norm; maybe breaking it isn't the end of the world.

Yet the likelihood is that a long shutdown would exert real negative gravitational pull on the stability of American government. There are key factors at play.

First, there's the message of dysfunction. Passing a budget – even a stopgap budget – to keep the government open is a sign that both the Democratic and Republican parties see the management of the government as a common task. They might differ deeply on policy priorities, but they agree that the government is necessary to effectuate the commands of the legislature and the president and to keep the country humming.

When and if the two parties reach a stand-off they are genuinely unwilling to resolve, the message they are sending to the country and the world changes. Instead of a message of underlying cooperation, the message will be of underlying disagreement – with cooperation only accidental and occasional. In other words, the organs of US government will be saying they have higher priorities than actually governing.

Short shutdowns are manageable because the public assumes that they will soon be resolved. That assumption makes sense because we believe that both sides think they will gain by reaching agreement – because the public wants the government to govern.

In Mr Trump's political experiment, he's open to the idea



that the public doesn't care, or at least care enough to punish him or the Republicans for shutting down government over the principle of the wall. Meanwhile, the Democrats are letting him run his experiment – by refusing to be bluffed.

If the quasi-constitutional norm that Congress and the president compromise to fund the government is broken, it means the assumption that the public wants government will have to be re-evaluated.

A functional federal government performs the basic tasks of preserving societal stability. Stability depends on more than just national security, which will be maintained during the shutdown. It includes basic regulatory functions: of the markets, the environment, food and drugs, and so on. Those function aren't consistently sustained during a shutdown.

Then comes the enforcement gap. The world's confidence in the US government – and by extension, the US economy – depends on seeing the American polity as basically functional.

A functional federal government performs the basic tasks of preserving societal stability. Stability depends on more than just national security, which will be maintained during the shutdown. It includes basic regulatory functions: of the markets, the environment, food and drugs, and so on. Those function aren't consistently sustained during a shutdown.

In a short shutdown, the public understands that the government will play catch-up in the aftermath. So stability isn't disrupted.

In a long shutdown, it is far from clear that the catch-up will make up for the regulation that will be lost. Slowly, gradually, maybe even imperceptibly, the social functions that depend on regulatory stability will begin to erode.

It isn't that bad actors will immediately start insider trading or breaking environment laws on some specific day in the shutdown. Or at least not exactly.

Rather, people will eventually begin evaluating whether the costs of compliance outweigh the benefits of violating the regulations – less enforcement will lead to more rule-breaking. The odds of

being caught are always part of the calculus.

Less regulatory enforcement means lower odds of being caught – hence more violations. Weaker enforcement isn't something that the American public will notice right away. Its consequences will accumulate subtly, over time.

But the rest of the world will eventually get the message that the institutions that create American political and economic stability are eroding. That will reduce confidence in American leadership. Rationally, it should also reduce confidence in the American economy.

In the Trump era, it's becoming commonplace to assume that the economic fundamentals that make the US attractive for investment will remain unaffected by political dysfunction. That's a mistake that confuses short-term predictions with the long-term institutional structures being damaged.

In the long run, the national commitment to effective government and meaningful regulation is necessary and unavoidable. Eroding it by a long-term shutdown will be costly – not today or tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of our lives.

BLOOMBERG

• Noah Feldman is a professor of law at Harvard University.

A sign indicating a national park closure due to the US government shutdown, at the entrance to Fort Point in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco, California, last week. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG



A strong resilient people with the right values and sense of community may be a better bet for the future than one overly dependent on good leaders, given the stage of Singapore's development, says the writer. Leaders can come and go, but if a people develop the instincts for survival, the benefits will be longer lasting, he adds.
ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

The 4G question: Whither exceptional Singapore?

Will Singaporeans be given space and freedom to be exceptional?



Han Fook Kwang
Editor-at-Large

It is all quiet on the leadership transition front in Singapore. That is how the fourth-generation (4G) leaders would like it. Leave them alone to decide who among them will become leader, they requested, after questions were raised about the progress of the search for a successor to the current prime minister.

In a statement on Jan 4 last year, they said: "The younger ministers are keenly aware leadership succession is a pressing issue and that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong intends to step down after the next general election. We are conscious of our responsibility, are working closely together as a team and will settle on a leader from among us in good time."

It was the first time the group, which included three ministers said to be front runners in the selection, had spoken out about the task before them. Going by the deafening silence on the issue since then, their message seemed to have been heard and heeded.

Even PM Lee avoided talking about it in the National Day Rally last year when in the past he had referred to it as one of the country's most important issues.

The unspoken rule is to make it a quiet, orderly and no-surprise handover. And that was indeed the case when on Nov 23 last year, Mr Heng Swee Keat was made the ruling party's new first assistant secretary-general. His 4G peers said there was consensus that he was the first among equals, which signalled that he is in line to succeed PM Lee in due course.

Singapore's third leadership transition has been a relatively quiet one. It wasn't always like that.

The first change from founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew to Mr Goh Chok Tong was in fact quite eventful. Even though Mr Goh seemed the obvious choice based on the appointments he held, Mr Lee dropped a bombshell

at the National Day Rally in 1988 when he declared to a nationwide audience that Mr Goh had not been his first choice to succeed him.

He followed it up a few days later with even more surprising comments, saying Mr Goh was not as decisive a leader as his first choice – then Finance Minister Tony Tan – and that he was "wooden" in his public communication. In the event, Mr Goh persevered, his colleagues rallied around him, and he was inaugurated PM in 1990.

As for the second handover to the younger Lee in 2004, it was a totally predictable affair but the talk then was all about the father-son relationship. The elder Lee had to answer repeated questions about cronyism and what it meant for Singapore to have two Lees in the Cabinet.

So, what issues surround the current transition? So far, they have been pretty standard fare, with most of the questions centred on who might be the man and whether he will be up to the job.

But even the who question has raised little excitement largely because none of the three – Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing and Education Minister Ong Ye Kung – seem to have made a deep impression on the public.

That is partly because of their relative inexperience, with Mr Heng and Mr Chan elected in 2011 and Mr Ong in 2015. It also has to do with the similarities of their backgrounds – all were in the public service with Mr Chan serving in the military.

As a result, no one stands out exceptionally. But there is a third and more important reason: The leaders have repeatedly emphasised teamwork as opposed to individual performance. PM Lee has himself noted that it would be "unrealistic and impossible" to find a single candidate with all the qualities needed.

He said: "What is important is the team. If among the team's members they have enough of these qualities, are able to cooperate and together, drive Singapore forward, lead the country – this is the most crucial... We have to find a competent team that can work closely together..."

This emphasis on the team raises an important issue. Singapore's leadership transition is always based on a generational change at the top, with most of the new leaders coming from the same

cohort replacing their elder colleagues.

It is pertinent therefore to raise questions about the group as a whole – what drives the current generation of leaders, what are the values they hold and how were their thinking and attitudes shaped in their formative years?

For Singapore, these questions may be more important than questions about individual qualities, given the way the leader is selected and the focus on the team.

In the first transition, Mr Goh's cohort was a unique group of technocrats with no experience in politics, handpicked to join the party and parachuted into senior positions in Government after they were duly elected.

The senior Lee was determined to replace his ageing cohort with these young men based on their ability to perform in their previous jobs, never mind their political inexperience. They were reluctant on the job, and they were thus able to get together with no political infighting or jostling for the top post. Singapore's first leadership transition was by all accounts successful, and it set the template for future handovers.

But as with copies, they have to ask if the underlying conditions are the same for the replication to work or if circumstances have changed to require a new approach. There are signs it may not be working as well as before.

The main worry is that the current group lacks diversity, with most of the 4G leaders (as these fourth-generation leaders are called) – including all three of the leading contenders – coming from the public service in some way or other.

Groupthink is an ever-lurking danger but even more so given the stage of development we are at. Research suggests that a homogeneous group tends to come to decisions too quickly. American psychologist Samuel Sommers has concluded that such groups agree on likely scenarios too early in the

discussion because members make the same assumptions.

It is a self-perpetuating problem as private-sector individuals might in turn be discouraged from joining a group when they see it comprises largely former civil servants and military top brass who think alike and know the system inside out. There is also a tendency for a closed group to preserve the status quo because they are heavily invested in it. As a result, they can become overly risk averse and resistant to change.

TEAM-CENTRED LEADERSHIP NEEDS DIVERSITY

These problems become magnified when leadership is team-centred.

If the team is all-important – as the leaders have repeatedly stressed – it is even more critical to make sure it is made up of people with diverse backgrounds who can offer different perspectives, and are willing to voice their contrarian views.

But in Singapore, ministers seldom, if ever, depart from the party line in public, almost always speaking with one voice even on the most contentious issues. No one knows how robust their internal discussions are and if individual ministers might have differing views.

It further reinforces the perception of sameness and homogeneity in its ranks.

To its credit, the 4G leaders recognise this. In the President's Address in May last year which set out their thinking, they said: "...the new leaders are conscious that Singapore is at quite an advanced stage of development. We may feel that we have more to lose now. We may be tempted not to go for bold changes, but instead be content to tweak things at the margins. That would be the wrong approach."

But on leadership succession, the ruling party does not have an alternative way and is unlikely to make any major change to its approach, boldly or otherwise.

It raises a wider question that goes beyond leadership renewal: Can Singapore afford not to consider alternative approaches in its economic and political development; to alter its formula for success if the circumstances require it?

Or is it too set in its ways, unable to respond fast enough to a rapidly changing world? This is the critical question as the country attempts to make the leap forward in the next phase of its development.

Two changes in particular will test the country and its leaders. The first is technology, especially in the digital world, and the second, geopolitical shifts in the balance of power in this part of the world.

The digital revolution has disrupted many traditional businesses in retail, transport, education, media and manufacturing. Singapore's economic growth has slowed down in recent years as it struggled to restructure to a more innovative, higher productivity economy, with local companies that are able to compete with the world's best.

As for geopolitical change, China's rise and America's relative decline will test Singapore leaders' ability to navigate the changing landscape nimbly, to protect the country's interest.

As a small country, it has only a small voice. But that voice will become even smaller if it is unable to replicate its past success and its economy shrinks in importance compared to its neighbours'.

Success begets success, from the economic to the political. Failure can similarly do the same, and a downward spiral can gather momentum quickly. If Singapore is unable to replicate its exceptional performance of the first 50 years of its nationhood, the implications go beyond the economic. Can it continue to be exceptional?

CAN SINGAPOREANS BE AN EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE?

Exceptional leadership will be hard to come by for the reasons cited above.

Singapore's pioneer leaders were a unique product of the circumstances of the time, unlikely to be repeated again.

Yet, some may argue that a country's fate depends as much if not more on its people than its leaders. This is even more so given where Singapore stands today – an economy that is operating at the cutting-edge of technology, a people who are well educated and well travelled.

A strong resilient people with the right values and sense of community may be a better bet for the future than one overly dependent on good leaders, given our stage of development. Leaders can come and go, and the great ones are as much a stroke of good fortune as anything else.

But if a people develop the instincts for survival, the benefits will be longer lasting.

Can Singaporeans be an

exceptional people, innovative and enterprising, daring to question the status quo, to venture out of their comfort zones, not be overly dependent on the Government, and able to bounce back from adversity?

They have the potential to be – with a meritocratic education system that is among the best to be found, with abundant opportunities to develop their abilities and a system that is open to the world.

There is one caveat: An innovative, enterprising people must be allowed space to express themselves freely, to venture into new areas, in business, the arts, and in politics. They cannot be over-protected, sheltered and controlled, made to believe there is one way to lead their lives and organise themselves. Singapore risks being such a society.

Most Singaporeans believe there is one set route to success – do well in school, get married, buy a new house with a 30-year loan, get a steady dependable job and stay out of trouble.

There is nothing wrong with this approach. The problem arises if everyone does it the same safe, risk-free way. The issue is exactly that mentioned by the 4G leaders – a society that has achieved so much in so short a time, afraid to make mistakes and to lose it all. If both leaders and the people have this attitude, Singapore will lose its exceptionalism and dynamism.

Will Singapore leaders be bold enough to allow the people more space in civic, commercial and political life to find new ways to grow and thrive?

Will Singaporeans be bold enough to seize the opportunity in this brave new world?

A Singapore that is no longer exceptional will have to come to terms with a new reality: It will change the political and social compact between leaders and the people, which has depended on leaders delivering exceptional performance.

What will the new relationship be? Of all the disruptions facing Singapore in the future, this might be the most challenging.

- Han Fook Kwang is Editor-at-Large with The Straits Times and a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.
- This article first appeared in the National University of Singapore Society's journal, Commentary Volume 27.

BIG PICTURE

WEATHER
Windy, with passing showers
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ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Going the whole hog for Chinese New Year

Usher in the Chinese New Year with the 12 zodiac signs at the Wan Qing Festival of Spring 2019. As part of the festival, Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall has partnered with artist Chin Sin May to conceptualise and produce an installation within the memorial hall's compound titled Reunion of the Zodiac, which reunites all 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac calendar. The Chinese zodiac calendar is based on a 12-year cycle, with each year being assigned one of 12 animals: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. It is believed to have originated from China during the Han dynasty (206BC to AD9). The year 2019 is the Year of the Pig, starting on Feb 5. The installation is inspired by the Chinese folk art of paper-cutting, and will be on display until Feb 24.

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New scheme to give air transport sector a lift

SkillsFuture programme lets poly grads study while working at a participating company



OPEN-MINDED

I learnt to have a positive mindset and I learnt about how technology can enhance efficiency... Before the course, I was sceptical about some technology like online banking, but now I have converted to iBanking. It has made me more open-minded.



MR DESMOND TAY, 55, a supply officer who maintains the database of Sats' procurement systems.

Sue-Ann Tan

More programmes will be made available to help employees in the air transport sector improve their capabilities.

A SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programme (ELP) launched yesterday will give fresh polytechnic graduates a head-start in their careers by teaching them skills required in the sector, such as design thinking, project management skills for business innovation and business analytics for decision-making.

The 18-month programme, the fourth ELP for the industry, leads to a specialist diploma in aviation management. Graduates would learn while working for the participating company at the same time.

Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Education Chee Hong Tat, who announced the programme yesterday, said the combination of learning on the job and the knowledge built up in the classroom "is powerful and is the way to go to have a more highly skilled workforce".

He added: "The ELP is an important initiative to support skills up-



Sats' in-flight catering centre. Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Education Chee Hong Tat, who visited the place yesterday, said Sats is not just about preparing of food, but also "using technology and combining that with good service and products... to meet the needs of customers". ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

grading and to ensure our workforce has the necessary skills to support industry transformation."

The new programme is being done in collaboration with SIM Global Education and airport ground-handling and in-flight catering service provider Sats. It marks the first time a private education institution will deliver an ELP in the air transport sector with industry partners.

Speaking during a visit to Sats' in-flight catering centre yesterday, Mr Chee added: "This programme is part of the overall SkillsFuture ELP initiatives to try and draw young Singaporeans and to equip them with the skills in the jobs and sec-

tors that are growing.

"At Sats, it is not just in preparing and ground handling of food, but providing efficient supply chains, using technology and combining that with good service and products... to meet the needs of customers. It is a highly complex operation that needs a highly skilled workforce."

The sector's Industry Transformation Map unveiled in April 2017 set a target of increasing productivity by about 40 per cent by 2025 while redesigning or creating 8,000 "good jobs", with more positions for professionals, technicians and cabin crew.

The new ELP starts in October.

Suitable candidates will be matched with a job related to their field of study and benefit from structured career development.

Eligible individuals can also receive a sign-on incentive of \$5,000, while companies can get a grant of up to \$15,000 for each participant to defray the costs of developing and providing structured on-the-job training.

Besides the ELP for fresh graduates, Sats is also rolling out a programme to equip its employees with digital skills.

This will involve helping 3,000 staff members embrace change and gain confidence to adapt in a technology-rich environment.

Sats completed a pilot of the programme last November.

One of the participants was Mr Desmond Tay, 55, a supply officer who maintains the database of Sats' procurement systems. His job scope includes testing new technology related to procurement.

He said: "The most important thing was that I learnt to have a positive mindset and I learnt about how technology can enhance efficiency. "Before the course, I was sceptical about some technology like online banking, but now I have converted to iBanking. It has made me more open-minded."

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EDB managing director Chng Kai Fong says manufacturing bolsters Singapore's mature economy by adding diversity and complexity and that many of the skills needed can be picked up easily by workers, unlike in other sectors. ST FILE PHOTO

Manufacturing remains integral amid changes in economy: EDB

Aw Cheng Wei

For all the increasingly sophisticated directions the economy is taking, manufacturing remains an integral part of the mix, according to the managing director of the Economic Development Board (EDB).

Mr Chng Kai Fong told The Straits Times in an interview marking his first year in the role last month that manufacturing strengthens Singapore's mature economy by adding diversity and complexity.

The skills it requires also allow displaced workers from other sectors to make the switch to working in

factories or plants relatively easily.

Manufacturing accounts for about 20 per cent of the economy and 14 per cent of jobs here, said Mr Chng, who joined the EDB in October 2017.

He said Singapore went into manufacturing in the early days because it was a quick way to feed a hungry but unskilled workforce. And as that workforce becomes increasingly sophisticated and the economy more complex, manufacturing provides a source of jobs that can absorb shocks in case other sectors, such as services, meet with challenges.

"Now that our workforce is more sophisticated, (manufacturing) is

CHANGING FOCUS

We deliberately focused much more on what kind of jobs and the value of the jobs we bring in, rather than just the pure number (of jobs).



MR CHNG KAI FONG, managing director of the Economic Development Board.

still important because (it) provides that base load (of jobs)... in good times or bad times," Mr Chng said.

Many of the skills needed for manufacturing can be picked up easily by workers, unlike in other sectors, he said.

"It is not so easy, frankly, to do a PCP (professional conversion programme)," he added, referring to the Workforce Singapore scheme that helps mid-career professionals, managers, executives and technicians reskill for new jobs.

That is because jobs in other sectors may have an emphasis on skills that are less well-defined, such as human networking, he said.

Jobs in manufacturing, however, can be based on tangible skills. "We have very successful stories of people converting from services... they got displaced, and then moved to manufacturing to become a plant or line manager," he said.

The EDB is focused on bringing in higher-quality jobs as it steers the economy towards advanced manufacturing, Mr Chng said.

As a result, a smaller number of new jobs may be created even as the amount of foreign investment here will remain similar to that in recent years.

Mr Chng noted: "We don't feel the pressure in creating so many jobs any more because our labour force growth is not really good."

Creating more jobs than the workforce can absorb may cause the economy to overheat, he said. "We deliberately focused much more on what kind of jobs and the value of the jobs we bring in, rather than just the pure number (of jobs)."

The EDB noted early last year that new jobs generated that year would be in areas such as advanced manufacturing. Then, Mr Chng had said: "Even as we create fewer jobs, more Singaporeans take up these jobs and they are better-quality jobs."

Last month, he said: "If we can actually skill up our own workers to take advantage of... advanced manufacturing, that's quite key."

Singapore attracted \$9.4 billion in fixed-asset investment in 2017, within the EDB's forecast of \$8 billion to \$10 billion.

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Participants in the incubator programme. LongHash aims to turn the projects into minimum viable products to be tested in the market. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Blockchain incubator programme launches in Singapore

A crypto-currency wallet that works with smart contracts, a digital marketplace to trade renewable energy certificates and an online protocol that uses biometrics to authenticate identities are some of the projects selected for an incubator programme launched yesterday.

Called LongHash Hatch, the 12-week programme aims to turn five blockchain projects into minimum viable products for testing in the market. It was launched by LongHash, an international blockchain incubator with offices in Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo, among others. The programme is supported by Enterprise Singapore.

The five projects for the inaugural batch were selected based on market review, the business model team's background and industry experience and technical expertise, according to a media release.

They were picked from 50 entries in the one month that LongHash was recruiting, a spokesman said.

Selected projects would receive

support in areas such as fund raising, branding and administration, the spokesman added.

Enterprise Singapore's director of new industries Yeo Meow Ling said that blockchain "is an emerging technology that can potentially benefit many industries with its application".

LongHash Singapore's chief executive Emma Cui said the Republic's friendly regulations, generous government support and the vibrant blockchain community were conducive for growing projects.

"We expect to see Singapore playing a pivotal role in shaping the global blockchain technology landscape and in leading mass adoption of distribution technology," Ms Cui said.

LongHash expects to incubate up to 30 projects in two years. It also wants to attract some of its leading blockchain projects to set up regional offices here.

Aw Cheng Wei

Start-ups hopeful as China readies Nasdaq-style tech board

SHANGHAI • China's ambitions for a Nasdaq-style board for start-ups have galvanised the country's tech companies which are hopeful that they can sidestep complex IPO (initial public offering) hurdles and access easier funding.

The surprise announcement for Shanghai's planned "technology innovation board" by China President Xi Jinping early last November paves the way for a lower listing threshold, potentially scrapping a requirement that aspiring companies must be profitable.

For Beijing, the move is seen helping to counter Washington's curbs on US technology companies and may draw the next generation of high-tech firms to list at home. Some of China's best known brands such as e-commerce firm Alibaba Group and gaming and social media giant Tencent Holdings have listed in New York and Hong Kong.

Last year, Chinese companies raised US\$64.2 billion (S\$87.2 billion) globally – almost a third of the worldwide total – via IPOs, but just US\$19.7 billion of that came from listings in Shanghai or Shenzhen, according to data from Refinitiv, compared with US\$35 billion in Hong Kong.

The intense interest in the new board, even before rules are finalised, underscores the significance to private Chinese companies of having an alternative source of funding.

"Our business is in the field of network information security and coding technology, and we're regulated by the (Communist) Party. So we cannot receive foreign capital or list overseas," said PeopleNet chairman Tan Jianfeng. "The new board is a very good (funding) opportunity for companies like us, and we have plans to list there."

According to the Hurun Report, China had 181 unicorns at the end of September, surpassing the United States as the country with the biggest number of start-ups worth at least US\$1 billion.

Officials have been scrambling to draw up detailed rules, expected to be published this month, with the aim of launching by June, the 21st Century Business Herald reported.

The new tech board, to be set up by the Shanghai Stock Exchange, will include a registration system – in effect removing official control of the IPO process that has for years produced a stop-start pipeline of listing candidates with a waiting time measured in years not months.

The board is also expected to allow listings from companies yet to make a profit – a common practice in tech-heavy markets such as New York and, more recently, on Hong Kong's main board.

"For the venture capital industry, spring is coming. But I hope the spring is enduring, not a short-lived one," said Mr Andrew Qian, chairman and CEO of New Access Capital, a Shanghai-based investment and financial advisory firm.

Bankers said IPO candidates may still be carefully scrutinised to protect investors. "You need to pay attention to a company's core technologies... if a pig farmer wants to list on the tech board, you need to screen it out, unless it makes epoch-making breakthroughs in breeding technology," said TF Securities' investment banking director Liu Guangfu.

REUTERS



Chinese investors have bought stakes in ride-hailing firms Lyft and Uber. However, they have all but stopped investing in the US in the wake of new policies aimed at curbing China's access to American innovation. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Chinese tech investors flee Silicon Valley as Trump policies bite

US takes action to curb China's access to American innovation

SAN FRANCISCO • New US policies aimed at curbing China's access to American innovation have all but halted Chinese investment in US technology start-ups, as both investors and start-up founders abandon deals amid increased scrutiny from Washington.

Chinese venture funding in US start-ups crested to a record US\$3 billion (S\$4.1 billion) last year, according to New York economic research firm Rhodium Group, spurred by a rush of investors and tech companies scrambling to complete deals before a new regulatory regime was approved in August.

Since then, however, Chinese ven-

ture funding in US start-ups has slowed to a trickle, Reuters interviews with more than 35 industry players show.

President Donald Trump has signed new legislation expanding the government's ability to block foreign investment in US companies, regardless of the investor's country of origin. But Mr Trump has been vocal about stopping China from getting its hands on strategic US technologies.

The new rules are still being finalised, but tech industry veterans said the fallout has been swift.

"Deals involving Chinese companies and Chinese buyers and Chinese investors have virtually stopped," said attorney Nell O'Donnell, who has represented American tech companies in transactions with foreign buyers.

Lawyers interviewed say they are feverishly rewriting deal terms to help ensure investments get the stamp of approval from Washington. Chinese investors, including big family offices, have walked away from transactions and stopped taking meetings with US start-ups.

Some entrepreneurs, meanwhile, are eschewing Chinese money, fearful of lengthy government reviews that could sap their resources and momentum in an arena where speed to market is critical.

Volley Labs, a San Francisco-based company that uses artificial intelligence to build corporate training materials, is playing it safe.

It declined offers from Chinese investors last year after accepting cash from Beijing-based TAL Educa-

tion Group as part of a financing round in 2017.

"We decided for optical reasons it just wouldn't make sense to expose ourselves further to investors coming from a country where there is now so much by way of trade tensions and IP (intellectual property) tensions," said Volley's CEO Carson Kahn.

A Silicon Valley venture capitalist told Reuters he is aware of at least 10 deals, some involving companies in his own portfolio, that fell apart because they would need approval from the interagency group known as the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (Cfius).

Cfius is the government group tasked with reviewing foreign investment for potential national security and competitive risks. The new legislation expands its powers. Among them: the ability to probe transactions previously excluded from its purview, including at-

VANISHING

Deals involving Chinese companies and Chinese buyers and Chinese investors have virtually stopped.



ATTORNEY NELL O'DONNELL, who has represented US tech companies in transactions with foreign buyers.

tempts by foreigners to purchase minority stakes in US start-ups.

China is in the crosshairs. The Asian giant has been an aggressive investor in technology deemed critical to its global competitiveness and military prowess. Chinese investors have bought stakes in ride-hailing firms Uber Technologies and Lyft, as well as companies with more sensitive technologies including data centre networking firm Barefoot Networks, autonomous driving start-up Zoox and speech recognition start-up AISense.

A dearth of Chinese money is unlikely to spell doom for Silicon Valley. Investors worldwide poured more than US\$84 billion into US start-ups for the first three quarters of last year, exceeding any prior full-year funding, according to data provider PitchBook.

Still, Chinese funders are critical to helping US companies gain access to the world's second-largest economy. Volley's Mr Kahn acknowledged that rejecting Chinese investment may make his start-up's overseas expansion more difficult.

"Those of us who are operators and entrepreneurs feel the brunt of these tensions," Mr Kahn said.

It is a radical shift for Silicon Valley. Money has historically flowed in from every corner of the globe, including from geopolitical rivals such as China and Russia, largely uninhibited by US government scrutiny or regulation.

Mr Reid Whitten, an attorney, said that of the six companies he recently advised to get Cfius approval for their investment offers, only two have opted to file the paperwork. The others abandoned their deals or are still considering whether to proceed.

"It is a generational change in the way we look at foreign investment in the United States," he said.

Some security experts applaud what they call long-overdue protections for US start-ups.

"What we are concerned about is a limited number of bad actors who are phenomenally clever about how they can access our intellectual property," said Mr Bob Ackerman, founder of AllegisCyber, a venture capital firm based in San Francisco and Maryland that backs cybersecurity start-ups. REUTERS

COLLECTIVE SALE OF 15 ENGGOR STREET PRIME COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITE

CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD
CEA Licence No. L3007333E

- FREEHOLD Tenure, located off Anson Rd & within CBD
- Site area: 1,021.9 sq m (Approx. 11,000 sq ft)
- "Commercial" with PR of 5.6+ and up to 35 storeys
- Minutes' walk to Tanjong Pagar MRT (EW Line) & future Prince Edward MRT (CC Line)
- Ideal for single-occupier with naming rights
- Potential to acquire state land at the rear (subject to relevant authorities' approval)

FOR SALE BY TENDER CLOSING DATE : 21 FEBRUARY 2019 (THURSDAY) 3.00PM

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A busy 2019 seen for S'pore bourse as listings and delistings pick up

This year's IPOs will come from delayed deals from 2018, while low valuations make ripe ground for M&As

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\$550m guide price for HighPoint collective sale

The condo, on a freehold site with land area of 47,606 sq ft, is near Orchard Road shopping belt

The HighPoint condo block in Mount Elizabeth Road has been listed for collective sale with a guide price of \$550 million, market-

ing agent CBRE said yesterday.

The block sits on a freehold site and has 57 apartments and two penthouses. It is on a cul-de-sac plot with a land area of 47,606 sq ft. It has a verified gross floor area (GFA) of about 211,976 sq ft, equivalent to a gross plot ratio of 4.45 times, and has a height control of up to 36 storeys. There is no development charge payable up to GFA

of about 213,383 sq ft, CBRE said. It added that the site could yield up to 196 units at an average unit size of 100 sqm.

The land rate for the site works out to about \$2,595 per sq ft per plot ratio. Taking into consideration the 7 per cent bonus gross floor area for balconies, the price will be about \$2,509 per sq ft per plot ratio.

HighPoint is a stone's throw from

the Goodwood Park Hotel and the Orchard Road shopping belt. It is also close to Anglo-Chinese School (Junior), Chatsworth International School (Orchard campus) and Singapore Chinese Girls' School.

CBRE executive director of capital markets Galven Tan said: "A site with attributes like HighPoint rarely becomes available. The potential 36-storey height will offer unblocked panoramic views featuring... Goodwood Hill and the central business district skyline."

"As part of our pre-marketing exercise, we have received positive feedback from a number of foreign developers."

Mr Tan said overall supply in the luxury segment "remains very limited and we believe the interest and pricing will continue to hold firm".

The public tender closes at 3pm on Feb 26.



The HighPoint condo block, housing 57 apartments and two penthouses, is in Mount Elizabeth Road. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG



Pufa Tower is located in Shanghai's core central business district of Lujiazui. It has 34 storeys and three basement-level car parks. Pufa Tower has not had a major renovation since its completion in 2002, with the interior finishes offering "room for improvement", said CapitalLand China. PHOTO: CAPITALAND

CapitaLand in joint venture to buy stake in Shanghai tower

Developer CapitaLand has entered a joint venture to buy part of a prime office building in Shanghai.

The block will be a seed asset for a value-add fund the firm is setting up "to invest in commercial real estate in key gateway cities in Asia", it announced yesterday.

The acquisition will immediately contribute to recurring income.

The 50:50 joint venture with an unrelated third party will acquire about 70 per cent of Pufa Tower for 2.75 billion yuan (\$546 million).

It will be CapitaLand's first office property in Shanghai's core central business district of Lujiazui in the Pudong New Area.

The deal will take the number of CapitaLand's owned or managed commercial properties in the Chinese financial capital to 21, spanning close to 1.9 million sqm in gross floor area (GFA).

Pufa Tower has 34 storeys and three basement-level car parks.

Once the acquisition is completed, CapitalLand and its joint venture partner will own levels eight to 19 and levels 21 to 32 with a total GFA of 41,773 sqm, as well as 61 carpark spaces with property title.

Pufa Tower's ground floor lobby and refuge floor on level 20 are co-owned with Shanghai Pudong Development Bank, which owns the rest of the building.

The Lujiazui district has the highest office rents in the city, with increases expected over the next few years in view of a sharp decline in Pudong's office supply from 2019, said CapitalLand.

Mr Lucas Loh, CapitalLand's president for China and investment management, noted: "Continual high demand for quality commercial properties in China's top tier cities, coupled

with low supply, have made the renewal of ageing commercial assets a compelling investment strategy in these markets."

"Pufa Tower is a prime asset to be seeded into the commercial value-add fund we are raising."

"We see... potential in enhancing

its asset value by upgrading specifications, tenant mix and improving operational efficiencies."

Mr Loh added that tapping third-party equity, as in this deal, can provide CapitaLand with "the financial impetus to further accelerate our growth".

Pufa Tower has not had a major renovation since its completion in 2002, with the interior finishes offering "room for improvement", said CapitalLand China chief investment officer Puah Tze Shyang.

"After acquisition, we will focus on extracting greater value from the property through a comprehensive asset enhancement initiative."

Realty Centre seeking \$165m in commercial en bloc sale market

The Realty Centre commercial block in the central business district has launched a tender for a collective sale with a \$165 million reserve price.

The freehold site in Enggor Street has a land area of 1,021.9 sqm or 11,000 sq ft.

It has an allowable gross plot ratio of 5.6 times and a maximum height of 35 storeys.

The site can yield approximately 321,797 sq ft of gross floor area upon redevelopment.

The plot has a verified gross floor area of 5,514.24 sqm or about 59,355 sq ft, equivalent to a plot ratio of about 5.4 times.

Based on the reserve price, the land rate is about \$2,714 per sq ft per plot ratio, inclusive of an estimated development charge of \$2.2 million.

The property is a five-minute walk to the Tanjong Pagar MRT station and the upcoming Prince Ed-

ward station on the Circle Line that is due to be completed by 2025.

Realty Centre is also near Amara Hotel/100AM and Tanjong Pagar Centre.

Ms Christina Sim, director of capital markets at the marketing agent Cushman & Wakefield, said yesterday: "This offering gives the potential developer a compelling opportunity to have a presence in our central business district."

"The site is also within the Tanjong Pagar Master Plan, a location slated for a massive transformation."

"With the planned relocation of Singapore's container ports to Tuas, which will free up some 1,000ha of prime waterfront land, Tanjong Pagar will be a colourful masterpiece showcasing the old and the new, the best of Singapore."

The tender closes at 3pm on Feb 21.



Realty Centre is a five-minute walk to the Tanjong Pagar MRT station. The site is also within the Tanjong Pagar Master Plan, a location slated for a massive transformation. PHOTO: CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

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Contact Capital Markets:

JEREMY LAKE
Salesperson Reg No.: R003698B
9633 2842

GALVEN TAN
Salesperson Reg No.: R003901F
9799 4898

YAP HUI YEE
Salesperson Reg No.: R041545Z
9852 3687

CHEN TIAN YI
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8160 8808

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CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD
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- Land Area: 3,001.2 sq m (approximately 32,305 sq ft)
- Approved GFA: 9,003.6 sq m (approximately 96,914 sq ft)
- No Development Charge
- Foreigners eligible to purchase / No ABSD payable

TENDER CLOSING DATE EXTENDED TO 21 JANUARY 2019 (MONDAY) 3.00PM

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- VivoCity, Harbourfront, Sentosa
- Potential for 271 apartments

Tender Closing: 29 Jan 2019 (Tues) 3 p.m.

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Singapore stocks rise on upbeat US news

Hopes raised over US-China trade talks, Fed chief's dovish rate hike comments

Lynette Tan

There were no Monday blues for local investors yesterday, with stocks starting the week in sprightly fashion, thanks to upbeat US wage data and dovish comments from the Federal Reserve over the weekend.

There was also optimism over trade talks between United States and Chinese officials, with hopes of a deal being struck amid the 90-day tariff truce.

Mr Stephen Innes, head of Asia-Pacific trading at Oanda, said risk sentiment is now on "more stable footing than when we opened 2019", thanks to a confluence of "market-friendly developments".

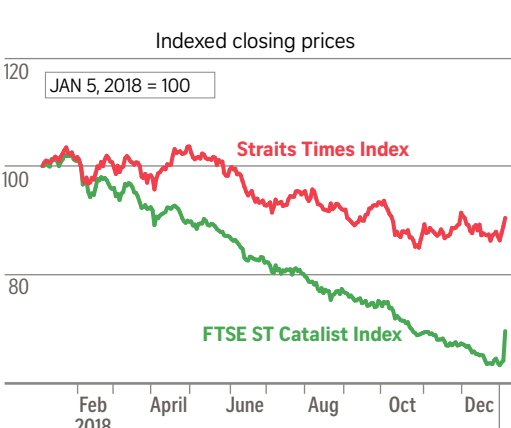
He also cited Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell's hints that the US central bank will pause interest rate increases until at least mid-year.

The buoyant mood sent the Straits Times Index (STI) up 1.42 per cent or 43.57 points to 3,102.8, with gainers outpacing losers 276 to 136 on trade of 1.39 billion shares worth \$984.1 million.

Stocks across most sectors made gains, underpinned by financials and industrials. United Overseas Bank charged ahead by 2.34 per cent to \$24.95. DBS put on almost 2 per cent to \$23.75 and OCBC Bank

Straits Times Index

Jan 7, 2019
3,102.80 ↑
+43.57 (+1.42%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
3,104.32
Day low
3,084.88
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)



FTSE ST Catalyst Index

Jan 7, 2019
307.85 ↑
+1.65 (+0.54%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
307.92
Day low
305.46
52-week high
490.47 (Jan 29, 2018)
52-week low
303.76 (Jan 3, 2019)

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Jan 7, 2019
752.04 ↑
+9.29 (+1.25%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
752.54
Day low
748.58
52-week high
877.87 (Jan 24, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)

added 1.79 per cent to \$11.37.

An outlier was Great Eastern, down 0.89 per cent to \$24.51. The stock has slid since the firm said last month that it was acquiring PT QBE General Insurance Indonesia for US\$28 million (\$38 million).

The transaction is expected to be completed in the first half of the year, subject to regulatory approval.

Industrial stocks showed their heft too. Sembcorp Industries traded 2.72 per cent higher at \$2.64 while Keppel Corp rose 2.52 per

cent to \$6.09. ST Engineering closed at \$3.51, up 1.15 per cent.

But technology stocks may be the ones to watch, as many of the factors that could affect prices – from intellectual property issues to tariffs – are tied to the US-China trade talks, said IG analyst Pan Jingyi.

Most tech and semiconductor shares rose ahead of the trade talks. Hi-P International shot up 12.21 per cent to 96.5 cents while AEM Holdings advanced 5.39 per cent to 88 cents. But the standout was Chuan Hup Holdings unit PCI, which surged 15 per cent to \$1.30.

Platinum Equity Advisors has offered to acquire all of PCI's shares via a scheme of arrangement. The American private equity firm is offering \$1.33 in cash for each share.

Asian markets also gained on improved sentiment. Japan's Nikkei jumped 2.44 per cent, and Australia's ASX 200 rose 1.14 per cent.

tanlyn@sph.com.sg



Mr Jim Yong Kim is leaving more than three years before his term is set to expire in 2022.

World Bank president Kim to step down on Feb 1

WASHINGTON • World Bank president Jim Yong Kim announced early today that he will be stepping down from his role at the international financial institution with effect from Feb 1.

The resignation of the 59-year-old Mr Kim, who has served as the multilateral lender's 12th president since 2012, came more than three years before his term was set to expire in 2022.

World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva will assume the role of interim president of the body after Mr Kim steps down.

Mr Kim announced that he will immediately join a firm and focus on increasing infrastructure in developing countries, but the bank did not provide further details, reported Reuters.

"It has been a great honour to serve as president of this remarkable institution, full of passionate individuals dedicated to the mission of ending extreme poverty in our lifetime," Mr Kim said in a statement.

Mr Kim was the first leader of the bank whose professional background was not in the political or financial sectors.

He was named the world's 50th most powerful person by Forbes Magazine in 2013.

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	264	+1	12505	6.1	1.3
200	161	CapitaCom Trust	180	unch	8838	4.8	1
388	298	Capitaland	314	+8	7678	3.8	0.7
232	195	CapitaMall Trust	230	unch	7270	4.9	1.1
1360	780	CityDev	834	+26	2116	2.2	0.7
251	196	ComfortDelGro	216	+1	7274	4.8	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2375	+46	3629	6	1.4
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US901	-9	242	2.3	-
141	85.5	Genting Sing	102	+3	45307	3.4	1.6
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25	+0.5	19986	3.2	0.6
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US24.5	unch	10117	10.7	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US659	-1	1903	3	0.3
6958	5580	JMH USD	US6850	-7	124	2.3	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3783	+34	107	0.8	0.4
4126	2766	Jardine C&C	3570	+18	420	3.2	1.7
892	567	Keppel Corp	609	+15	3696	3.6	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1137	+20	4705	3.3	1.2
585	455	SATS	469	+3	1248	3.8	3.3
950	472	SGX	726	+7	1777	4.1	8.3
1184	914	SIA	935	+8	1780	4.3	0.8
292	231	SPH	240	+4	5982	5.4	1.1
370	319	ST Engineering	351	+4	3249	4.3	5.1
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	264	+7	3467	1.9	0.7
365	283	Singtel	294	+4	17339	7	1.7
94.5	57.5	ThaiBev	615cd	+0.5	48438	1	3
3037	2380	UOB	2495	+57	2376	4	1.2
938	591	UOL	628	+20	1584	2.8	0.5
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1444	+73	2007	4.2	1.9
331	297	Wilmar Intl	319	+6	5028	3.1	0.9
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	127	unch	15234	3.5	0.9

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	264	+1	12505	6.1	1.3
127	105	Ascott Reit	180	unch	732	6.5	0.1
78.5	59	Bumitama Agri	64	unch	144	1.2	1.5
185	143	CDL HTrust	148	+1	1293	-	1
200	161	CapitaCom Trust	180	unch	8838	4.8	1
388	298	Capitaland	314	+8	7678	3.8	0.7
232	195	CapitaMall Trust	230	unch	7270	4.9	1.1
169	133	CapitaR China Tr	138	-1	1429	7.3	0.9
1360	780	CityDev	834	+26	2116	2.2	0.7
251	196	ComfortDelGro	216	+1	7274	4.8	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2375	+46	3629	6	1.4
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US901	-9	242	2.3	-
78	59	Far East HTrust	61	unch	386	-	0.7
197	150	First Resources	155	+1	1577	4.4	2
236	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	221	+3	2685	5.4	1.1
119	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	104	+2	7744	0.6	1.1
141	85.5	Genting Sing	102	+3	45307	3.4	1.6
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25	+0.5	19986	3.2	0.6
234	167	GuocoLand Ltd	180	+3	60	3.9	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US24.5	unch	10117	10.7	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US659	-1	1903	3	0.3
6958	5580	JMH USD	US6850	-7	124	2.3	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3783	+34	107	0.8	0.4
4126	2766	Jardine C&C	3570	+18	420	3.2	1.7
59	44.5	Kepp Infra Tr	49.5	+1	3938	7.5	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	609	+15	3696	3.6	1
133	108	Keppel Reit	116	+1	5346	4.9	0.8
215	151	MI	206	-2	12077	5.5	3.9
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US188	-3	82	1.6	1.4
172	152	Mapletree Com Tr	168	-2	7788	5.4	1.1
213	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	194	-1	3175	6.1	1.3
138	118	Mapletree Log Tr	131	+1	3849	5.8	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	114	-1	8061	6.6	0.9
84	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77	-0.5	3103	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1137	+20	4705	3.3	1.2
215	136	OUE	145	+3	107	2.1	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUE HTrust	67	unch	883	0.9	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	174	+2	500	4.3	0.9
60.8	28	Oxley	28.5	unch	2799	5.3	0.8
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	265	+2	956	5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	110	+1	422	2	2.6
585	455	SATS	469	+3	1248	3.8	3.3
850	672	SGX	726	+7	1777	4.1	8.3
1184	914	SIA	935	+8	1780	4.3	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	239	unch	780	5.4	1.8
292	231	SPH	240	+4	5982	5.4	1.1
109	98	SPHREIT	102cd	+1	1857	5.4	1.1
370	319	ST Engineering	351	+4	3249	4.3	5.1
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	264	+7	3467	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	160	+3	6235	1.3	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	41	-15	23098	7.3	6
147	88.5	SingPost	92.5	unch	5407	3.8	1.2
365	283	Singtel	294	+4	17339	7	1.7
299	158	StarHub	176	+3	1027	9.1	5.4
78	63.5	Starhill Gbl Reit	68	+0.5	984	6.7	0.7
225	163	Suntec Reit	182	+1	4063	5.5	0.9
94.5	57.5	ThaiBev	615cd	+0.5	48438	1	3
10.2	37	Thomson Medical	7.6	unch	7956	-	2.8
3037	2380	UOB	2495	+57	2376	4	1.2
938	591	UOL	628	+20	1584	2.8	0.5
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1444	+73	2007	4.2	1.9
331	297	Wilmar Intl	319	+6	5028	3.1	0.9
244	183	Wing Tai	196	+2	300	4.1	0.5
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	127	unch	15234	3.5	0.9
191	116	Yanlord Land	127	+4	1776	5.4	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	134	-1	197	7.7	1
71	48	Accordia Golf Tr	52	+0.5	142	7.4	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	78.5	+1	466	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	108	+4	437	5.6	1.3
59.5	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.8	+0.2	1907	47.1	0.2
67	48	Banyan Tree	58	unch	422	1.7	0.8
279	115	Best World	263	-11	8608	1.6	9.4
88	76	Boustead	79	-	-	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	84.5	+3	624	8.3	2.2
658	521	Bukit Sembawang	564	-1	45	3.2	1.1
88.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	71	+15	1622	10.2	1
57	39.5	Centurion	41	unch	169	6.1	0.7
171	104	China Aviation	109	+3	1463	4.1	0.9
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	31	+0.5	291	1.6	0.6
165	90.5	China Sunline	125	+3	1027	2.4	1.4
107	64	Chip Eng Seng	68	+2	3106	5.9	0.5
53.5	31.5	Cosco	34.5	+0.5	5559	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	605	-3	42	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20	+0.4	170	9.3	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	70	+0.5	129	8.6	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	51.5	+0.5	7060	7.5	0.9
142	92	First Reit	100	+15	654	8.6	1
155	134	Fraser's Com Tr	138	+1	1748	7	0.9
82.5	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	70.5	unch	450	-	0.9
28.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	18.2	+0.4	2055	5.5	1.1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78.5	unch	18	2.9	2.4
70	52	Health Mgt Intl	55.5	-	-	0.6	5.3
279	73	Hi-P Intl	96.5	+10.5	11231	25.9	1.5
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	257	+1	34	5.1	0.6
82.5	71	IREIT Global	73.5	+1	158	8.1	1
42	18.3	Indofood Agri	19.4	+0.4	62	-	0.2
79.5	43	Japfa	75.5	unch	1826	0.7	1.4
84.5	49	KSH	51	+0.5	36	4.3	0.9
86.9	53	Kepp-KBS Reit USD	65.5	+15	1430	-	0.6
148	128	Keppel DC Reit	137	unch	1092	5.2	1.3
188	132	Keppel T&T	186	unch	2337	1.9	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	7.8	+0.1	22968	-	1.1
79.5	44.5	Lian Beng	47	unch	503	4.8	0.3
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	19.5	+0.4	2821	17.6	0.7
55.5	30	MM2 Asia	30.5	+0.5	1388	-	1.7
98.5	69.5	Manulife Reit USD	82	+0.5	655	6.7	0.7
121	95	Metro	100	unch	14	5	0.6
32	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	OUE Com Reit	46.5	+1	712	10	0.5
68	54	PEC	59	+3	77	3.4	0.7
46	17	POSH	17.4	+0.2	48	-	0.5
66	44.5	Q&M Dental	50	+0.5	101	3.2	3.6
117	55.5	QAF Ltd	59.5	unch	237	8.4	0.7
85	70	RHT HealthTrust	73	+1	549	6.2	1
124	96	Riverstone	114	-4	527	2	3.7
55	22	SIIC Environment	28.5	+0.5	177	-	0.5
45	38	Sabana Reit	40	unch	304	8.3	0.8
119	90	Sheng Siong	108	+1	996	3.1	6
25.5	12	Sino Grandness	12.7	-0.1	454	-	0.2
72	56	SoilbuildBizReit	59	+1	1072	9.7	0.9
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	83.5	+15	75	-	0.7
50	32.5	Tuan Sing	35.5	unch	441	1.7	0.4
136	54	UMS	55.5	+25	5948	8.4	1.4
112	58.5	Valuetronics	69	+15	4148	6.6	1.58
17.8	8.3	Ying Li Intl	11.5	-0.2	2878	-	0.3
55	24	Yoma Strategic	35	-0.5	5413	0.7	0.9
37.5	16.1	Yongnam	18.5	+0.2	852	-	0.4

Institutional investors shifting assets to private markets: Poll

BlackRock clients cite economic concerns as they cut allocation to public assets in portfolio targets

Fears of an economic downturn are prompting increasing numbers of institutional investors to shift assets from public markets to the private sphere, a new survey shows. It found that 51 per cent of those polled intend to decrease their allocation to public equities this year. The same survey in previous years found that only 35 per cent had planned such a move for 2018 and 29 per cent for 2017. The trend is greatest in the United States and Canada where 68 per cent plan to do so, compared to

40 per cent in Asia-Pacific and 27 per cent in continental Europe. Asset manager BlackRock conducted the poll among 230 of its largest institutional clients, representing more than US\$7 trillion (\$9.5 trillion) in assets. It noted that 56 per cent of respondents overall cited the possibility of the economic cycle turning as the key influence on their rebalancing and asset allocation plans. The level among Asia-Pacific respondents was 60 per cent. The rebalancing will include increased allocations in three main areas, with 54 per cent aiming for real assets such as infrastructure, 47 per cent opting for private equity and 40 per cent targeting real estate. These three areas were similarly popular in the Asia-Pacific region,

with 65 per cent of respondents in the region intending to increase exposure to real assets, 44 per cent to real estate and 40 per cent to private equity. The poll also noted that 38 per cent of investors are looking to increase fixed-income allocations, up from 29 per cent last year. Respondents also expect to boost allocations to other fixed-income areas, such as short duration (30 per cent), securitised assets (27 per cent) and emerging markets (29 per cent), “likely reflecting relative value opportunities in these asset classes”, said BlackRock. However, most institutions want to maintain (65 per cent) or even increase (20 per cent) their cash levels in 2019, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, where a third of respon-

dents plan to lift their cash holdings to protect their portfolios. Institutions are also changing their focus within equity portfolios. The top three aims are to reduce public market risk (41 per cent), to increase allocations to higher-returning products (32 per cent) and to focus more on environmental, social and governance strategies and impact investing (28 per cent). Asia-Pacific respondents had the same top two priorities but their third biggest concern was increasing diversification and reducing home market bias (27 per cent). The survey was conducted in November and early December last year. Assets from Asia-Pacific institutions represent a quarter of the total assets owned by all survey respondents.

CompanyBriefs

Centurion Corporation

Centurion Corporation is inviting noteholders to exchange \$85 million of 5.25 per cent notes due 2020 for new \$85 million of 5.5 per cent notes due 2022, it said yesterday morning. It will pay a 0.25 per cent exchange premium to noteholders who offer to exchange their notes by the expiry deadline and whose notes are accepted for exchange. The invitation began at 9am yesterday and will expire at noon on Jan 18. Centurion said the move comes on the back of interest from major noteholders who want to extend their bond investment, in light of impending early redemption. Centurion intends to exercise its option to redeem all the outstanding existing notes on the interest payment date of April 12, 2019 – a year ahead of the maturity date. Notice of this early redemption is expected to be given to shareholders between March 15 and 22. Existing notes may only be offered for exchange in principal amounts of \$250,000 and multiples thereof. Those which are not exchanged are expected to be redeemed on April 12 at 100 per cent of their principal amount, together with interest accrued to but excluding April 12. The coupon on existing notes will step up to 7.75 per cent if the notes are not redeemed by April 12, 2019. The coupon on the new notes will step up to 8 per cent if they are not redeemed by Feb 1, 2021. The new notes are expected to have an issue date of Feb 1, 2019, and a maturity date of Feb 1, 2022.

ClassPass

ClassPass, a fitness marketplace start-up that gives users access to wellness classes and health clubs, has acquired its Asia-based competitor GuavaPass as part of its plans to grow its footprint in the region. With the deal, ClassPass has acquired GuavaPass’ operations in 11 cities across Asia including Singapore, Bangkok, Dubai, Hong Kong, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. ClassPass said in a statement: “GuavaPass founders Jeffrey Liu and Rob Pachter will join the ClassPass team, along with select GuavaPass talent, to further expand ClassPass’ international presence.” The acquisition is expected to be completed by the end of the month, and GuavaPass will cease operations in markets where ClassPass is available. However, in markets where ClassPass does not have a presence, the GuavaPass brand will continue to operate but under the ClassPass umbrella. With the acquisition, ClassPass now operates in over 80 markets across 11 countries and has plans to launch in at least 50 new markets this year.

Japanese financial services company Tokyo Century has made an additional undisclosed investment in Grab, as well as a capital injection in its car rental arm Grab Rentals, taking its cumulative investment in the ride-hailing platform to US\$175 million (\$238 million). ST FILE PHOTO



Tokyo Century boosts total investment in Grab to \$238m

DEEPENING PARTNERSHIP

Tokyo Century will continue deepening its partnership with Grab to expand its automobile businesses overseas, and to enter new businesses related to ride-hailing and ride-sharing service businesses as well as the financing business.



TOKYO CENTURY, in a statement.

Japanese financial services company Tokyo Century has made an additional undisclosed investment in Grab, as well as a capital injection in its car rental arm Grab Rentals, taking its cumulative investment in the ride-hailing platform to US\$175 million (\$238 million). Tokyo Century entered into a strategic partnership with Grab to collaborate on new leasing and car rental options in 2016, making its first strategic investment in the Singapore-based start-up for an undisclosed amount that year. Further investment was announced in January last year. The firm, which has been offering financing for vehicles in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia as part of its

tie-up, said its latest move comes “in the wake of steady expansion of collaborative business with Grab”. “Tokyo Century will continue deepening its partnership with Grab to expand its automobile businesses overseas, and to enter new businesses related to ride-hailing and ride-sharing service businesses as well as the financing business,” it said in a media statement yesterday. Grab said that with the latest investment, Grab Rentals will expand the product offerings for its drivers, including flexible-term rentals and an upcoming electric vehicle fleet. Grab Rentals will also tap data and advanced fleet management solutions to improve safety standards and reliability.

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against \$ Bid	Offer	Against US\$ Bid	Offer
S\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9674	0.9680	0.7134	0.7136
Canadian dollar	1.0153	1.0160	0.7490	0.7487
Euro	1.5507	1.5517	1.1436	1.1439
NZ dollar	0.9150	0.9159	0.6748	0.6752
Sterling pound	1.7288	1.7297	1.2749	1.2751
US dollar	1.3560	1.3565		
S\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	19.7942	19.8035	14.5975	14.5990
Danish kroner	20.7667	20.7775	15.3146	15.3170
Hong Kong dollar	17.30	17.31	12.7603	12.7606
Indian Rupee	195	195	14.360	14.364
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	125.39	125.47	0.9247	0.9250
Korean won	0.1212	0.1215	0.0894	0.0895
Malaysian ringgit	32.95	33.00	24.3013	24.3309
New Taiwan dollar	4.4033	4.4051	3.2473	3.2474
Norwegian krone	15.7983	15.8097	11.6507	11.6547
Philippine peso	25.880	25.892	19.086	19.088
Saudi riyal	36.1494	36.1675	26.6588	26.6624
Swedish krona	15.1804	15.1928	11.949	11.9500
Swiss franc	137.7909	137.8977	101.6157	101.6570
Thai Baht	4.2415	4.2457	3.1279	3.1299

MSCI INDICES

	Jan 4	Index	% dy	% yr
			Change	Change
World Preliminary	1452.6	2.5	0.8	
EAFE Preliminary	1014.4	1.3	0.6	
Europe Preliminary	1428.8	2.5	1.7	
Australia	1137.4	-0.1	-0.3	
Austria Preliminary	523.7	3.9	5.2	
Belgium Preliminary	941.2	3.3	2.9	
Canada Preliminary	1841.1	1.6	0.6	
Denmark Preliminary	7635.9	2.0	3.1	
Finland Preliminary	670.9	3.4	2.7	
France Preliminary	1715.8	2.7	0.1	
Germany Preliminary	863.1	3.4	2.3	
Greece Preliminary	45.2	3.1	4.3	
India	1243.2	0.4	-1.5	
Indonesia	7161.2	1.0	1.2	
Ireland Preliminary	185.8	3.6	3.6	
Israel Preliminary	237.2	2.3	2.8	
Italy Preliminary	641.7	3.4	3.1	
Japan	879.0	-1.6	-1.6	
Korea	592.3	0.6	-1.9	
Malaysia	575.0	-0.4	-1.1	
Netherlands Preliminary	1462.8	2.4	0.3	
New Zealand	133.0	0.5	0.2	
Norway Preliminary	2897.1	2.6	4.0	
Pakistan	360.0	0.4	0.9	
Philippines	1316.4	1.3	4.3	
Portugal Preliminary	83.0	2.7	2.8	
Singapore	1586.9	1.4	-0.5	
Singapore Free	341.2	1.4	-0.5	

Government securities

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	102.18	102.22	102.21
5-Year	NX13100H	2.750%	01-Jul-23	103.28	103.33	103.25
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.71	103.98	103.75
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	111.81	112.08	111.85
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	96.87	97.10	97.10
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	103.15	104.05	103.30

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

தமிழ் மூலம்

Lost in translation?

A → அ

Tamil Murasu provides error-free translation from English to Tamil

Proof reading available

Phone: 63194062 Email: cmuthu@sph.com.sg

How much money have you made on your home?

my Capital Gain \$104,000 (12.68%)

SRX.com.sg/property-tracker

THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018

PRESENTED BY UBS

The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year award, organised in partnership with UBS for the fourth year running, seeks to honour the positive impact made by Singaporeans and celebrate the triumph of the human spirit

Elizabeth Tan

Entrepreneur Elizabeth Tan grew her father's shoe shop into a global chain with 50 stores. She is also a humanitarian who set up Sight To Sky, a charity which organises annual mobile eye clinics in India, Pakistan and Nepal.

FINALIST

Read about the other finalists at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the Singaporean of the Year 2018 by Jan 15, 6pm

Cast your vote now at str.sg/soty18vote

Terms and conditions apply

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With Deepest Sympathy and
Heartfelt Condolences
To The Family of The Late



SAM SEE KOON

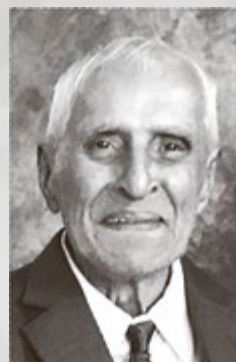
Departed on 7 January 2019

From:
Management and Staff Of
Singapore Press Holdings Limited



"The eternal God is your dwelling place,
and underneath are the everlasting arms." Deut 33:27

Our Deepest Condolences to
**Bishop Rennis Ponniah and
Revd Jeremy Ponniah and Family,**
On the loss of their Beloved Father



Mr Dravium D. Ponniah

Called Home to the Lord on 5 January 2019

With love from:

Chairman and Members of the Education Board of
the Diocese of Singapore (the Anglican Church)
Chairmen and Members of the Board of Governors
and Management Committees of the following
Anglican Schools and Pre-schools:
Anglican High School
Christ Church Secondary School
St. Andrew's Autism School
St. Andrew's Junior School
St. Andrew's Secondary School
St. Andrew's Junior College
St. Hilda's Primary School
St. Hilda's Secondary School
St. Margaret's Primary School
St. Margaret's Secondary School
Ascension Kindercare
The Ascension Kindergarten
Kiddy Ark Childcare & Development Centre
Little Seeds @ Noah's Ark
Little Seeds @ Pasir Panjang Hill Brethren Church
Little Seeds @ St. Paul's Church Kindergarten
Little Seeds @ The Salvation Army (Ang Mo Kio)
Little Seeds @ The Salvation Army (Bukit Batok East)
Little Seeds @ The Salvation Army (Bukit Panjang)
Little Seeds @ The Salvation Army (Tampines)
Praiseland Child Care & Learning Centre
Queenstown Good Shepherd Kindergarten
Sonshine Childcare Centre
St. Andrew's Cathedral Child Development Centre
St. Hilda's Kindergarten
St. James' Church Kindergarten (Leedon)
St. James' Church Kindergarten (Harding)
St. James' Church Kindergarten (Gilstead)

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7



DR ANDREW NG KANG CHIN
Age: 71

Was called home to be with our Lord Jesus on 7 January, 2019.
Deeply missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Spouse: Belinda Ng-Lim Chin Choo

Sons:

Nathaniel Ng Kuang Chern
Joel Ng Kuang Jong

Granddaughters:

Janna Ng Zhi Xin
Simone Amina Ng Shuangyi
Estelle Ng Xin En
Corinne Adeke Ng Shuangqi

Daughters-in-law:

Charmaine Woo Mei Fong
Bernadette Iyodu

Our deepest appreciation to Dr Quek Peng Kiang, Assoc Prof
Koo Wen Hsin, Assoc Prof Cynthia Goh and the medical team at
NCCS, SGH and Assisi Hospice for their care and support.

Wake is held at Bartley Christian Church, John Willis Hall,
Level 2, 4 How Sun Drive, Singapore 538526.

Nightly services will be held at 8pm from
9 January 2019 to 11 January 2019.

Cortege leaves on Saturday, 12 January, 2019 at 10.45 am for
Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 11.25 am.

"I am the resurrection and
the life; he who believes in
Me will live, even when he dies."
John 11:25



Ang Theng Whee

Age: 88

Was called home to be with
the Lord on 6 January 2019.
Deeply missed and fondly
remembered by loved ones.

Husband:

Chan Bok Teng (deceased)

Daughters:

Chan Aik Hoon
Chan Aik Huang

Sons & Daughter-in-law:

Chan Ek Poo, Joel
& Chan Yit Wah

Chan Ek Liang, Jaryl

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Block 30 Jalan
Klinik, Singapore 160030
(facing Jalan Bukit Ho Swee)

Nightly services at 8.00pm.
Cortege leaves on Thursday
10 January 2019 at 2.15pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2
for cremation at 3.00pm.

9th Anniversary



Lee Ho Miah

Departed: 8 Jan 2010

God took you from
our home but never
from our hearts

Always in our hearts,
deeply missed by

Mom: Mary Tan (deceased)

Wife: Tracy Mui Choy Yee

Sons:

Kevin Lee Fei Yang
Michael Lee Fei Xiang

Aaron Lee Yang Yang

Daughter:

Jessie Lee Fei Fei

Daughter-in-law:

June Ho Wai Peng

Grand-daughter:

Hannah Lee En Yi

Second Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
a Devoted Wife and Mother



NG SOON HUEY

Departed 8 Jan 2017

Missed is the touch of your friendly hand,
Gone is your kindness beyond recall;
Gone to a world where peace and love
Are given and gained by all.

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by your

Husband: Mak Kum Kay

Sons: Mak Weng Kin & Mak Weng Cheong
Relatives and Friends.

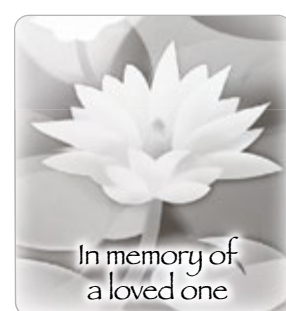
With Deepest Sympathy &
Heartfelt Condolences to
The Family of The Late



LTA JONAS LIM JUN YIN
Departed on 6 January 2019

From:

The Commanders, Men and Women of
30 SCE



In memory of
a loved one



MR HARAWANT SINGH DHUDIKA

S/O Late Bhajan Singh Dhudikae and Late Gurbachan Kaur
Husband of Satran Kaur

Age: 65

Passed away peacefully on 6th January 2019

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Cremation will take place at Mandai Crematorium

Hall 4 on 8th Jan 2019 at 7:15 p.m.

Bus will leave @ Khalsa Dharmak Sabha @ 5.30 p.m.

Akhand Paath will be held on Wednesday

9th Jan to 11th Jan at Khalsa Dharmak Sabha.



In memory of
a loved one

1st Anniversary

An Eternal Memory of a Much Loved Son



Aaron Sng

Departed on
8 January 2018

"I was glad when they say
unto me, let us go to the
House of the Lord...
I will lie down and sleep in
peace, for you alone O LORD
make me dwell in safety."

To our son, Aaron
Gone too soon

You are our FIRST THOUGHT every morning

And our LAST THOUGHT every night

Loved with a love beyond all feelings...

Missed with a grief beyond all tears...

Deeply loved and missed by Dad, Ma & Caleb

Rest peacefully, until we meet again

On the Tenth Anniversary,
we remember



Bernard Winston Ware
Departed on 8 January 2009

Time changes many things

But never the memory this day brings.

Very dearly missed by wife Violet,
son Darren, brothers, sisters, friends
and all loved ones.



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71

YEARS INDIA HAVE TOURED AUSTRALIA
BEFORE WINNING A TEST SERIES C8

SPORT

SPORTSG TO RUN
S'PORE SEVENSNational sports agency and
Sports Hub to take over staging
of rugby event from SRU & RSG

Shamir Osman

There are only three months to go before Singapore opens its doors to again welcome the world's best rugby sevens players on April 13 and 14.

But there has been hardly any publicity for the fourth edition of the HSBC Singapore Rugby Sevens.

The Straits Times understands that the Singapore Rugby Union (SRU), which holds the rights to the tournament, and its commercial arm Rugby Singapore (RSG), will no

longer jointly organise the Singapore leg of the HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series.

Instead, national sports agency Sport Singapore (SportSG) and the Singapore Sports Hub will now put together the event that has attracted 140,000 fans over the last three years.

Insiders revealed that the existence of expensive deals raised eyebrows, and RSG staff were told in a meeting in November that they would be seconded to either SportSG or the Sports Hub to help organise the Singapore 7s.

SportSG declined to reveal details of what happened behind the scenes, but a spokesman said in response to queries from ST: "The HSBC Singapore Rugby Sevens has been doing well over the years.

"Particularly, last year's edition

was very well-received in the series circuit where the well-attended event created positive memories for everyone.

"We aim to build on this foundation and will always look at ways to enhance our offerings.

"This year, Sport Singapore, Singapore Sports Hub and Singapore Rugby Union will continue to work together to ensure that the Singapore 7s will be a great sporting event and experience for fans, players, volunteers, officials and spectators."

The situation has surfaced at a tricky time for the Singapore 7s. The current contract ends after this year's edition and the Republic has submitted a bid to continue to host a leg of the series.

Sources close to World Rugby revealed that the sport's interna-

tional body wants Singapore to continue hosting a leg of the series, but it refused to be pulled in on the matter.

"World Rugby will confirm the successful host unions for the next four-year cycle of HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series shortly. Until this time, we will not provide comment with regard to the process or outcomes," said its spokesman.

This move by SportSG, at least on the surface, goes against its mantra of encouraging self-sustainability in national sports associations (NSAs).

In 2017, former SRU president Low Teo Ping told ST that the Singapore 7s will provide the SRU a sturdy platform from which it can propel the sport into the future.

He said then: "The long-term goal would be to wean ourselves away

from government grants... which is a realistic target within five years. That money can be given to other sports instead."

SportSG administers government funding for local sports, with close to \$90 million each year channelled into grants to NSAs and national athletes. The SRU receives annual funding of between \$750,000 and \$1 million.

It remains unclear if profits from the 2019 event will be channelled back into the sport.

ST also understands that the SRU is in the process of renewing its status as an Institution of Public Character (IPC).

Governance and tight financial reporting are two key factors for organisations looking to receive IPC status which allows for a 250 per cent tax deduction for all donations made to an accredited organisation.

"As part of the IPC status renewal process, SportSG has asked the SRU to address some of the audit findings that we found during our scheduled internal audit," said a SportSG spokesman.

"Once we are satisfied with the rectification, we will renew their IPC status accordingly."

A SRU spokesman said: "SRU's management committee and finance department have addressed the audit points and have updated SportSG accordingly.

"We are extremely optimistic that SportSG will renew our IPC status soon."

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China's Yu Dabao rounding Kyrgyzstan goalkeeper Pavel Matiash in the 78th minute to score the winning goal in the 2-1 Asian Cup Group C victory yesterday.

Below: South Korea forward Hwang Ui-jo made light of Tottenham Hotspur star Son Heung-min's absence to net the winner against the Philippines yesterday. PHOTOS: XINHUA, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Asian Cup 2019

Hwang saves South Korea,
China off to winning start

DUBAI • Hwang Ui-jo scored nine goals to usurp his more illustrious compatriot Son Heung-min in South Korea's 2018 Asian Games gold-winning campaign.

In the absence of the Tottenham Hotspur star, the Gamba Osaka man turned out to be the hero again yesterday, scoring the winner as the Asian Cup contenders toiled to a 1-0 Group C opening win over debutants Philippines despite having over 80 per cent of the ball.

The in-form Son, with nine goals in 10 games for Spurs, will join the team after the Premier League match with Manchester United, meaning he would be available only

for the final game against China.

Philippines coach Sven-Goran Eriksson had promised to give the Asian powerhouses a fight and the AFF Suzuki Cup semi-finalists nearly scored first. Korea, the 2015 runners-up who are hoping to win their first Asian Cup since 1960, were indebted to Kim Seung-gyu.

The goalkeeper dived to his right to deny Javier Patino in the 54th minute before Hwang scored the winner 13 minutes later.

In the other Group C game, a double goalkeeping blunder helped China come from behind to beat the 91st-ranked Kyrgyzstan 2-1.

The Central Asians bossed the

first half on their Cup debut and forced Italy's 2006 World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi into introducing a 24th-minute substitute, Yu Dabao, who turned out to be the match-winner.

While they deservedly led 1-0 at the break after Akhliidin Israilov's rasping strike, they were undone by their goalkeeper Pavel Matiash. First, he palmed the ball into his net shortly after half-time. Then he was caught in no-man's land before he was rounded by Beijing Guoan forward Yu 12 minutes from the end.

Lippi was "enormously unhappy" about the 76th-ranked China's first half, saying: "I thought if we keep



playing like that, we're going to lose. The goalkeeper's error, it's very lucky. After that, we created many chances, I am proud of what we showed in the second half."

Meanwhile, Thailand sacked coach Milovan Rajevac seven hours after Sunday's 4-1 loss to India.

The Serb was already under pressure going into the quadrennial tournament. Last month, he failed

in the defence of the country's Asean title, albeit with a weakened team, losing to Malaysia in the semi-finals on the away-goals rule.

Assistant coach Sirisak Yodyathai was appointed as acting coach, with Group A games against Bahrain (on Thursday) and host United Arab Emirates to come.

Football Association of Thailand president Somyot Poompanmoung

said: "Like all Thai football fans, I am also disappointed with the result. But, as the FA president, I cannot stand still with this problem."

Rajevac, 65, was hired in April 2017 to replace Kiattisuk Senamuang after spells with Qatar and Algeria.

He was best known for guiding Ghana to the last eight of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa and was voted the confederation's Coach of the Year.

But his pragmatism, preferring to counter attack at times, has won few fans, who want to see a more attacking Thailand instead of a direct style with long balls.

Ironically, India were able to hit them on the counter repeatedly in the second half and scored thrice.

Former Socceroo Robert Cornthwaite tweeted: "The Thai fans and media wanted to see a more attacking side but at what cost? Lost their defensive stability and already conceded twice inside 50 minutes."

Thailand, appearing for the first time since co-hosting the Cup in 2007, have now won just one of 21 games at the continent's showcase competition. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

UNDERDOGS HAVE THEIR DAY

Newport, Barnet and Oldham show why FA Cup continues to thrill with giant-killing feats

LONDON • Try telling Padraig Amond, Shaquille Coulthirst or Callum Lang – an unlikely trio of footballing journeymen – that the FA Cup has lost its lustre.

Try persuading the fans of Newport County, Barnet and Oldham

Athletic, who all rejoiced in classic giant-killing feats on Sunday, that the grand old competition has mislaid its power to amaze and delight.

The Cup will, once again, likely be won by one of the Premier League's big guns in May, but the traditional

third-round weekend at the turn of the year offered a timely reminder of why it remains close to the heart of English fans.

After minor league Barnet had stunned four-time winners and Championship side Sheffield United 1-0 away with Coulthirst's penalty and fourth-tier Oldham beat Premier League side Fulham 2-1 with Lang's late header, the best was saved for last.

At Newport's rocking Rodney Parade, Amond's 85th-minute penalty sealed an unforgettable 2-1 win over 2016 English champions Leicester City.

The humble Welsh club, former Uefa Cup quarter-finalists, have endured a chequered history and went bust in 1989, only to reform and climb back slowly from the lowest ranks of minor-league football.

Two seasons ago, they seemed certain to slip out of fourth-tier League Two and back into obscurity.

But, under manager Michael Flynn, who took over with them 11 points adrift at the bottom, they have been transformed and now own a place in FA Cup folklore.

The club, 13th in League Two, came close last year when another Amond goal took them to within eight minutes of beating Tottenham before Harry Kane equalised and Spurs won the replay 2-0.

This time, Amond made sure New-

port would not be denied as he tucked away a nerveless penalty, shortly after Leicester's Rachid Ghezzal's piledriver had cancelled out Jamille Matt's early opener.

Newport survived the anxious final minutes to record their first win over a top-flight club since beating Sheffield Wednesday in the third round in 1963-64.

"It's almost Roy of the Rovers stuff. It's the first time I've beaten a Premier League club as a manager so it's one I'll never forget," said Flynn, who joined his players for boxes of peri peri chicken delivered to the home dressing room.

"It's massive for the club to be in the fourth round again and to get some much-needed finances."

Darren Currie, handed the Barnet manager's job on a temporary basis last month, praised the fearlessness of his side after their shock win over Sheffield United, flying high in third place in the Championship.

It is the first time the National League side have reached the fourth round since 2008 and they were the lowest-ranked team in yesterday's draw.

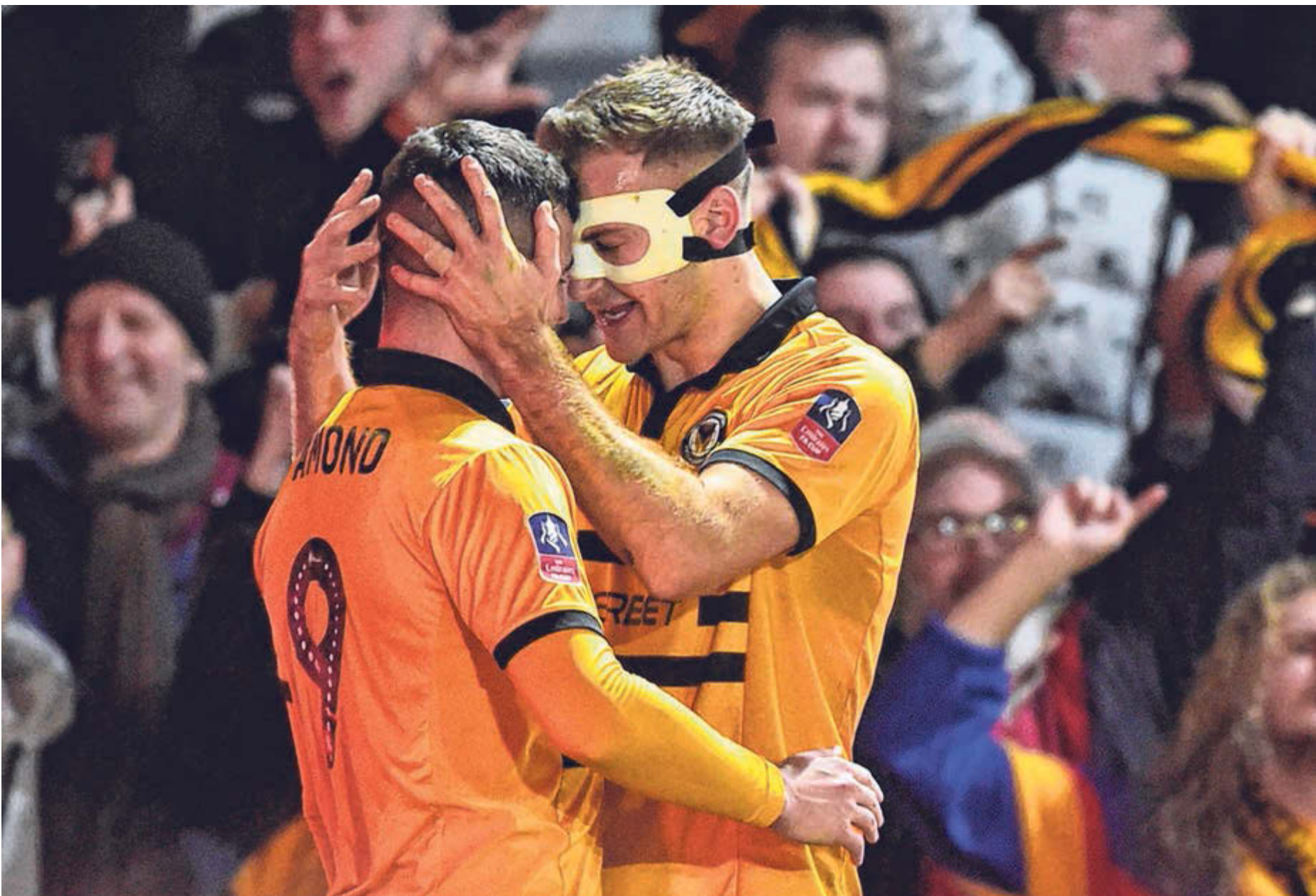
"They've been brilliant. I was proud of them in the two previous games, but this takes it to a whole new level," Currie said of his team.

Oldham caretaker manager Pete Wild, who has been in charge for less than a fortnight since Frankie Bunn's exit, saw his side bridge a 59-place gap in the English league pyramid to upset Fulham.

"We're from a small town overshadowed by big neighbours and I'm so proud to give something back," he said.

Fulham manager Claudio Ranieri accused his players of lacking passion, saying: "We need the fire, the passion, the blood. We need everything if we want to be safe. That is the real problem."

THE GUARDIAN, REUTERS



Above: Newport County's unlikely 2-1 triumph over the 2016 Premier League champions Leicester City in the third round of the FA Cup on Sunday exemplified the romance of the competition, leaving fans like this man struggling to contain his delight and disbelief.

Left: Newport County's Padraig Amond celebrates scoring the winner against Leicester with teammate Mickey Demetriou. The humble Welsh club, who are former Uefa Cup quarter-finalists, have endured a chequered history and went bust in 1989, only to reform and climb back slowly from the lowest ranks of minor-league football.

PHOTOS: REUTERS

Alli confident 'strong squad' can end trophy wait

LONDON • Dele Alli has pledged to end Tottenham's 11-year wait for a major trophy as his side head into an explosive League Cup semi-final showdown with Chelsea tonight.

Spurs have not won a major competition since beating the Blues in the 2008 final. They also lost to the same team in the 2015 final.

The four-time Cup winners are

still in the Champions League and FA Cup, and also have an outside chance in the Premier League title race. But it is the League Cup that presents their first chance to end the silverware drought.

While the competition is often written off as an after-thought for top clubs, England star Alli is adamant it could be the first major

prize for highly regarded manager Mauricio Pochettino, yet to win a trophy in his coaching career with Spurs, Southampton and Espanyol.

"I think every game, every competition, you want to win it," Alli said.

Spurs crushed fourth-tier Tranmere 7-0 in Friday's FA Cup third round using only three first-team regulars, including Alli, in a bid to

keep the key men fresh for Chelsea.

Alli expects the plan to pay dividends, saying: "I believe we've got a strong squad."

"Players work hard to make sure we're fully fit and the manager makes changes. I think he's very good at that."

Chelsea, who host the second leg on Jan 22, will give late fitness tests

to Olivier Giroud (ankle) and winger Pedro (hamstring).

Manager Maurizio Sarri is unsure whether midfielder Cesc Fabregas has played his last game but he feels the Spaniard must leave for the good of his career.

Fabregas, 31, appeared to say goodbye after Saturday's 2-0 FA Cup win over Nottingham Forest,

applauding all sides of Stamford Bridge. His contract expires this season, with British media reporting he is close to securing a move to Monaco this month.

"I don't know if he is able to play tomorrow because in the last match he had cramp in the calf so he needs to rest I think," Sarri said yesterday.

"I don't know the decision of the club. In my opinion, he needs to go," AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

TOTTENHAM V CHELSEA

StarHub Ch202 & Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.55am

Real blast VAR for not flagging penalty in 2-0 loss

MADRID • A fuming Santiago Solari questioned the point of video technology after Real Madrid were denied what the coach called "a penalty every day of the week" in a shock 2-0 Spanish LaLiga home loss to strugglers Real Sociedad on Sunday.

With Real trailing 1-0 in the second half, Vinicius Jr fell over the outstretched arm of goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli in the box. Referee Jose Luis Munuera Montero neither awarded a penalty nor consulted the video assistant referee (VAR).

"If VAR is not used in a play like that, then it loses the whole point of its existence," said Solari after the hosts were booed off by 53,412 fans, the Bernabeu's second-lowest crowd this season, following a sixth defeat this season.

"We are all human and we all make mistakes. But, when you have the chance to look over the evidence again and you do not, it's difficult to understand."

The technology has been in use in Spain's top flight since the start of this season.

According to protocol, the VAR operators are only supposed to inform the referee and ask for a play to be reviewed if the official has made an "obvious mistake".

Real also thought they had a penalty in the first half when captain Sergio Ramos collided with Asier Illarramendi, but Solari said he gave the benefit of the doubt to the referee and to VAR.



Real Sociedad custodian Geronimo Rulli colliding with Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr on Sunday. The referee neither awarded a penalty nor consulted the VAR, to Real's dismay.

PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Ramos called the Vinicius case "scandalous", adding: "I've always supported VAR, but this leaves you with your head in your hands."

For Solari, the honeymoon period he enjoyed in November after replacing Julen Lopetegui is well and truly over. Real are fifth on 30 points after 18 games and the loss almost certainly ended their hopes of catching LaLiga leaders Barcelona, who won 2-1 at Getafe

later and are 10 points ahead.

Before kick-off, the European champions paraded the Club World Cup trophy they won for a third straight time. But the mood was punctured three minutes later when Casemiro hauled down Mikel Merino in the box, and Jose William smashed his kick down the middle.

Real rallied with a glut of chances but failed to find the net. Midfielder Ruben Pardo sealed the

points with a late header for Sociedad's first win at Real since 2004, after the hosts' winger Lucas Vazquez was sent off for a second yellow card.

Real director Emilio Butragueno also took issue with the VAR.

"We are always very respectful towards referees and we are in favour of VAR, but we do not understand this incident," he said. "It was a critical moment." REUTERS

LOTTERY

TOTO

Mon, 7 Jan 2019 Draw No. 3438/2019

Group 1 Prize \$1,203,503

Winning Numbers

01 02 36 39 41 42 37

Prize Group

Share Amount

No. of Winning Shares

Group 1	\$1,203,503	1
Group 2	\$253,369	1
Group 3	\$1,599	109
Group 4	\$451	211
Group 5	\$50	5,522
Group 6	\$25	5,503
Group 7	\$10	90,570

Group 1 prize and total share amount for Group 1 may differ due to rounding.

Next Draw Fri, 11 Jan 2019 Draw No. 3439/2019

Group 1 Prize \$5,000,000 est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS

Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Tue, 8 Jan 2019				
A League	Western Sydney	Wellington	4.50pm	LW
Asian Cup	Iraq	Vietnam	9.30pm	LW*
Wed, 9 Jan 2019				
Asian Cup	Saudi Arabia	Korea DPR	12.00am	LW*
French League	Nantes	Montpellier	2.00am	LW*
English League Cup	Tottenham	Chelsea	4.00am	LW*
French League Cup	Lyon	Strasbourg	4.00am	LW*

LW* : Telecast available at Livewire(Marina Bay Sands) only
Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.
LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above)
Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)
SB: Sportsbuzz@Krow (21 years and above)
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6796 6688 for more details.

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SPARKING A LONGING FOR THE LONG GAME

India captain Kohli hopes first series win in Australia will boost interest in Test cricket

SYDNEY • India captain Virat Kohli hopes the breakthrough Test series triumph in Australia will inspire renewed reverence and passion back home for the longest form of the game.

A draw at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Monday gave the visitors a 2-1 win – with the hosts being spared by the rain in a one-sided finale – and broke a 71-year cycle of unsuccessful tours Down Under.

Kohli hoped it would act as something of a counterweight to the popularity of shorter, more explosive brands of cricket that have increasingly dominated the Indian game.

“I see this series as a stepping stone for this team to inspire the next lot of Test cricketers,” he said.

“To be passionate for Test cricket firstly. In a world where a lot of people want the easy stuff, matches that finish in the evening, it is important to spread that message of Test cricket.

“We want to build on this and always promote the message of Test cricket being the most important and valued format, which it rightfully is. This is our vision for Indian cricket.”

Few players typify the long-form cricketer more than Cheteshwar Pujara, who has eschewed shorter formats to fine-tune his Test game and earned his reward with three centuries and 521 runs.

Kohli initially refused to single out any individual performers. When he did yield, it was not man of the series Pujara he lauded but seamers Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah.

“If your fast bowlers are happy and fighting as a team, you can win anywhere in the world,” he said.

“In the past 12 months I would rate their contribution as far above all the batsmen.”

Kohli played his own part with a century in Adelaide and, less skil-

fully but no less importantly, by winning three of the four tosses.

The lessons from series defeats in South Africa and England had laid the groundwork for this triumph that he said trumped even the 2011 World Cup triumph on home soil.

“It is more special purely because of the fact that we have badly wanted to win a series away from home,” he added.

His opposite number Tim Paine desperately looked for positives but struggled to find many.

In Sydney, the follow-on enforced by Kohli, after being duly dismissed for 300, was the first time in 30 years they had suffered such ignominy at home. They were set a daunting 622-7 declared, powered by Pujara’s 193, in the first innings.

For some Australians, the series will always carry an asterisk given their two best batsmen, Steve Smith and David Warner, were unavailable because of bans they received for the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last year.

The vaunted pace attack of Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins failed to fire, except for spells in the victory in Perth. Aus-

tralia were comprehensively outplayed the rest of the series.

Paine pinpointed the opener as one that got away and could have changed their fortunes. India won it on the fifth day by just 31 runs in Adelaide. He said: “We honestly feel we let that Test match slip. We had a number of opportunities and, when those key moments came up, India outplayed us.”

Their squad for two Tests against Sri Lanka are due to be announced tomorrow, with the matches being Australia’s last red-ball cricket before the Ashes tour to England later in the year.

Asked how the batsmen, who did not manage a single century, are to handle an English attack if they were not able to deal with India’s quicks on docile pitches in Melbourne and Sydney, Paine suggested that not much would be changed.

“We can’t help that we haven’t got Mike Husseys or Michael Bevens,” he added, referring to two explosive former players. “We’ve got what we’ve got and the group is trying as hard as we can to get better.”

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



A jubilant India captain Virat Kohli cheering as his team celebrate with the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after they secured India's first Test series triumph on Australian soil. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SportingLife

On hardy Aussie soil finally blooms an Indian dream



Rohit Brijnath

Assistant Sports Editor

As words go in sport, “earn” has an imposing weight. It is short, muscular and unfussy. It is a word which suggests no one is entitled to victory, that in competition there are no favours, that no bonus points are given just because you tried.

No, to earn is to acquire through merit.

There is no timeframe to “earn”, no guarantee, no deal that labour for a required number of years will bring victory. No, you keep working, keep believing, keep buying Scotch tape to bind broken dreams, keep going.

Ask Liverpool. Zero league titles in 28 years. Ask the Atlanta Hawks. Zero NBA titles for 60 seasons.

So you wait.

Fans started waiting for India to win a Test cricket series in Australia from 1947. Joe Louis was heavyweight champion. Fans got old waiting for victory, they got married and then waited with their kids as new teams wrote old stories of loss. They waited till loss became a jinx and then turned into a curse.

Years passed, decades ended, a century turned. Indians argued about Australian bounce, fear, horizontal bat shots and waited. They cursed, pleaded, tuned into Channel Nine and waited. They even moved to Australia as migrants – 291,916 between 2000 and 2016 – and filled stadiums and waited. Religion, it sometimes seems, knows less about faith than sports fans do.

Then yesterday India won their first series, 2-1, in Australia. In the game’s toughest format they subdued the sport’s toughest land. Team – and fan – had earned it.

People will say this is India’s greatest Test team and it smells like overstatement but this day was for applause not argument. A team

defeated in England had cemented its cracks, kept its belief, won small skirmishes, married patience to urgency, bowled ferociously, ignored silly headlines (The Scaredy Bats, an Australian tabloid called them) and waited out tough bowling spells.

Captain Virat Kohli yesterday spoke of a nine-over spell bowled by Pat Cummins to him and Cheteshwar Pujara in Adelaide which yielded only eight runs. They were shaken but still there. Perhaps India won because they never went away.

India won the series stylishly, comprehensively and wore their intent almost always under a civil coat. This was worth the wait. The only line again crossed by Kohli – who was stupidly booed, can be overwrought and still has edges to sandpaper – was the batting crease, outside which he stands with classic contempt.

Elsewhere rival wicketkeepers discussed babysitting. Australian captain Tim Paine took a phone call on a reporter’s phone during a press conference and Kuldeep Yadav was thrilled Shane Warne was watching

Kohli has built a team in his image: lean, urgent, bearded, defiant, fit, ambitious, sure, unselfish. Every time his team needed a hand, many went up. He gives his side an intensity and maybe they soften him a little. After all India’s two best players were a fast bowler, Jasprit Bumrah, whose deliveries snort even as he smiles and a devout batsman, Pujara, wrapped in contemplation.

him take five wickets. It was cricket, fair but hard.

Kohli has built a team in his image: lean, urgent, bearded, defiant, fit, ambitious, sure, unselfish. Every time his team needed a hand, many went up. He gives his side an intensity and maybe they soften him a little. After all India’s two best players were a fast bowler, Jasprit Bumrah, whose deliveries snort even as he smiles and a devout batsman, Pujara, wrapped in contemplation.

Bumrah was something Australians had not seen and India had waited for: a genuine, 140kmh-plus, eyelash-trimming Indian fast bowler. Pujara was something we knew but considered extinct: in a Kill Bill-like IPL world he was a non-violent Test sculptor. He finished with more runs (521) than Australia’s two best put together and this was not incidental. Almost everywhere India was twice as good.

This was not the Australian team we once knew, who used to walk as if they owned the land and could score runs with a fence post. This was a hesitant side of brittle batting

but even if we accept Australian cricket is rehabilitating, this does not dilute India’s win. You can only beat the rival in front of you. Roger Federer once beat Marcos Baghdatis in an Australian Open final. There are no asterisks to be attached here, only acclaim.

And yet only the unfeeling would not flinch at Australia’s cricketing slide. Everyone wants to see the bully tamed and yet cricket has always been lifted by their rugged, resolute style. Their rapid revival is necessary for if the kingdom of strong Test-cricket teams shrinks, being monarch won’t count for much.

But the game has a powerful missionary and in a time of short attention spans has come Kohli the evangelist of the long game. “I think it is important to spread that message of Test cricket”, he said and it was gently ironic. Purists might dislike him and yet he is leader of their most powerful cause.

Kohli, who was part of India’s 2011 World Cup-winning team, in India itself, saw this victory as a greater one for himself. Nothing more of its importance needs to be said. It might seem unjust that a drizzle interrupted India’s bid for another Test win yesterday, but there was no raining on this parade. When history is made, the moment glitters even in the gloom.

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Next 48 Hours

TODAY

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group D: Iraq v Vietnam (9.20pm). Gp E: Saudi Arabia v North Korea (11.50pm) – Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208.

English League Cup S-finals, 1st leg: Tottenham v Chelsea (StarHub Ch202 & Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.55am).

TENNIS

World Tennis Challenge Day 2 (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 4pm).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL

ABL Mono Vampire v CLS Knights (StarHub Ch202, 7.30pm), Malaysia Dragons v Alab Pilipinas (Ch201, 8.30pm).

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group F: Japan v Turkmenistan (6.50pm), Uzbekistan v Oman (9.20pm). Gp E: Qatar v Lebanon (11.50pm) – Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208.

English League Cup S-finals, 1st leg: Man City v Burton Albion (StarHub Ch202 & Singtel TV Ch111, Thursday, 3.40am).

Live telecast times are subject to change. For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

SPORT



Winning a WBC silver title could take Nurshahidah Roslie into the top 10 or even top five, says her coach and local promoter Arvind Lalwani. BH FILE PHOTO

SportsWorld

Runner-up finish for bowler Tan in Sweden

Singapore's Cherie Tan finished second at the AIK International Tournament in Stockholm on Sunday. The 30-year-old, who had hit a perfect game in the earlier rounds, lost 227-213 to Thailand's Kim Bolleby and had to settle for a cheque of 30,000 Swedish kronor (\$4,500) as runner-up. Fellow Singaporean Shayna Ng finished eighth and took home 11,000 Swedish kronor.

Rooney fined for drunken behaviour

WASHINGTON • Former England and Manchester United star Wayne Rooney was arrested last month for being drunk and swearing in public and paid a US\$25 (\$34) fine last Friday, according to reports. He was arrested by the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority at the Dulles International Airport in Loudoun County, Virginia on Dec 16 for cursing and intoxication, a misdemeanour for which he was released from custody on his own recognisance. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Rangers sign veteran striker Defoe on loan

GLASGOW • Rangers strengthened their Scottish Premiership title bid by signing ex-England striker Jermain Defoe from Premier League club Bournemouth in an 18-month loan move on Sunday. Defoe, 36, has 162 English top-flight goals. Rangers, managed by former England and Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard, are level on points with champions Celtic at the top. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Timberwolves fire coach Thibodeau

LOS ANGELES • The Minnesota Timberwolves (19-21) fired their coach and team president, Tom Thibodeau, on Sunday after a 108-86 rout of the LeBron James-less Los Angeles Lakers. He was sacked with 2½ seasons left on his five-year contract. Ryan Saunders was made interim coach. At 32, he will be the National Basketball Association's youngest coach. NYTIMES

'SNIPER' AIMS FOR BIG BREAK

S'pore's top boxer Nurshahidah sets sights on WBC silver super bantamweight title

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Over the last three years, Singapore's top women's professional boxer Nurshahidah Roslie has had 12 fights, won 10 of them, and claimed four regional-level titles. The 31-year-old, nicknamed "The Sniper", has set her sights on her biggest breakthrough this year – winning the World Boxing Council (WBC) silver super bantamweight (up to 55kg) title. The fight will be in Singapore and will take place around the middle of the year, and as early as April, said Nurshahidah's coach and local promoter Arvind Lalwani. "She's been doing very well with her ranking, and has won two WBC Asia titles, so in the WBC's eyes, she deserves to be a contender,"

said Lalwani, a former national amateur boxer. According to boxing ranking site Boxrec, Nurshahidah is the world's 26th-ranked women's super bantamweight boxer. She has won the super bantamweight and featherweight titles of WBC Asia, a Thailand-based affiliate of the WBC. The WBC is one of the four major sanctioning bodies alongside the World Boxing Organisation, the International Boxing Federation and the World Boxing Association. The WBC silver title is just one rung below its world title, formerly held by the likes of current mixed martial arts star Holly Holm (welterweight) and Laila Ali (super middleweight), the daughter of the late legendary boxer Muhammad Ali. While Nurshahidah is no stranger to stepping into the ring to

FULL OF UPS AND DOWNS
There has definitely been lots of highs and lows over the last three years... But, at the end of the day, that's what makes this journey in boxing so exciting.

”
NURSHAHIDAH ROSLIE, the top local female pro boxer, on winning two WBC Asia titles as well as enduring heartbreaking decisions.

contest for a title, she told The Straits Times yesterday: "It's a different feeling this time. I'm hungrier than ever, especially after last year's defeat." Last July, she won 10 rounds with Australian April Adams in Brisbane and looked to have edged the fight, but all three Australian judges scored the win for the local boxer. "That loss was a real eye-opener. It made me want to prove a point. And it told me that I need to be more convincing in the ring," said Nurshahidah. She did just that, bouncing back with wins over two Thai opponents in August and November. The Singaporean is aiming to improve her record to 11 wins and two losses at the end of the month, when she takes on 21-year-old Thai upstart Napaporn Ruengsuwan (2-1) in Bangkok on Jan 27. The big goal, however, is the WBC silver title. Lalwani said he has not secured

an opponent for Nurshahidah yet, but he has shortlisted two Argentinians and a South African fighter as potential title rivals. "These girls are high-level fighters," he said. "We will negotiate with them about the purse, give the names to WBC, and then they choose who to fight Nurshahidah for the title. "Winning the silver title would change a lot of things for her. It would take her into the top 10 or even top five." For now, Nurshahidah only wants to keep her head down and gloves up. "There has definitely been lots of highs and lows over the last three years... Things like having to get backup after a loss, trying to do better and regain confidence," she said. "But, at the end of the day, that's what makes this journey in boxing so exciting."

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62 gives Schauffele title on 'crazy day'

MAUI • Xander Schauffele started the final round five behind the pace, opened with a bogey but still managed to win the Tournament of Champions by one stroke from overnight leader Gary Woodland after a course record-equalling 62. He flew under the radar despite making birdies on four of his next five holes, before chipping in for his first eagle at the ninth at the Kapalua Plantation course on Sunday. He holed out for his second eagle from 107 yards out on the fairway at No. 12 and birdied Nos. 14 and 15. In a see-saw battle, an aggressive 200-yard approach left him with a nine-footer for birdie at the 17th, the first of the day on the hardest hole on course. He birdied the par-five 18th with two putts from 12 feet, then watched from the scoring tent as Woodland failed to sink a 10-footer to force a play-off. "Honestly, it was a crazy day," Schauffele said after signing for a 23-under total of 269. "Got nothing to lose. Wind was down, the easier holes played easier and the tougher

holes played harder. We figured if we could kind of sneak a few in on the tougher holes, we might have a chance." The 2017 PGA Tour Rookie of the Year has won all four of his titles in come-from-behind fashion, including a play-off victory at the World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions in Shanghai in October. His fellow American Woodland, who led four-time Major winner Rory McIlroy by three strokes going into the final round, had five birdies in his 68 for 270. But the duel between the duo never materialised in the tournament, which is open only to PGA Tour event winners and saw seven of the world's top eight in action. Woodland is now zero for seven when leading into the final round of a PGA Tour strokeplay event. McIlroy, whose 72 was the worst of the top 10 finishers, will sympathise with him, having recently also struggled to convert his chances. The Northern Irishman played the final round of the first Major of



2018 with eventual winner Patrick Reed at the Masters but faded to finish equal fifth. He was also paired last year with Tiger Woods (Tour Championship), Justin Thomas (WGC-Bridgestone Invitational) and Francesco Molinari (European Tour BMW PGA Championship). He was beaten each time. He said: "My attitude was much better today. I didn't press at all, I was very patient." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

A joyous Xander Schauffele after winning the Tournament of Champions at the Plantation Course at Kapalua Golf Club in Hawaii. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ishikawa returns for SMBC Singapore Open

David Lee

Former teenage sensation Ryo Ishikawa will take another shot at becoming the first Japanese golfer to win the SMBC Singapore Open title since Kesahiko Uchida's triumph in 1976. The 27-year-old, nicknamed "The Bashful Prince" for his good looks, confirmed yesterday that he will compete at the Jan 17-20 event that will be played on the Serapong Course at Sentosa Golf Club. The US\$1 million (\$1.36 million) event is jointly sanctioned by the Japan Golf Tour Organisation (JGTO) and the Asian Tour. Ishikawa, who finished joint-16th at last year's event, shot to fame in 2007 when he became the youngest winner on the Japanese circuit by winning the Munsingwear Open KSB Club. By the end of 2008, he became the youngest player to reach the top 100 of the world rankings, and was also the youngest to crack the top 50 the following year. A serious back injury in 2016, however, interrupted his career.

While he could not add to his 14 JGTO titles last year, he finished second at the Token Homemate Cup and had three other top-10 finishes. In an earlier interview with The Straits Times, Ishikawa said he aims to win a Major title and also taste success on the US PGA Tour in the next 10 years. Other than Ishikawa, the top five players from the JGTO money list will also play at the SMBC Singapore Open. They are Shugo Imahira, Shaun Norris, Yuki Inamori, Kodai Ichihara and Yuta Ikeda. World No. 26 Sergio Garcia of Spain will be back to defend his title. The 2017 Masters champion will be joined by Ryder Cup-winning teammate Paul Casey, 54-year-old American great Davis Love III and 22-year-old Englishman Matthew Fitzpatrick. Tickets for the SMBC Singapore Open are on sale via ApacTix. Children below the age of 12 enjoy free entry – a move aimed at encouraging more juniors to go and watch top golfing action.

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life

D LADDER OF SUCCESS
Showcase of eight
young artists
D4



*Life isn't about
finding yourself.
Life is about
creating yourself.*

— George Bernard Shaw

Live more.
Bank less

SSO's 40 years of inspiring the nation

As the home-grown orchestra celebrates its remarkable achievements, music lovers say it can do more to expand its repertoire and support Singaporean composers



Akshita Nanda
Arts Correspondent

Trumpeter Lau Wen Rong hated music lessons as a child. Then he heard the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) play when he was seven and fell in love with classical music.

Now he is one of the youngest and newest members of the orchestra and will play at its 40th anniversary gala concert on Jan 18 at the Esplanade Concert Hall.

"This is my dream job," says the 28-year-old Singaporean, who has played full-time with the orchestra since 2017.

In 40 years, the SSO has gone from an aspiring ensemble of 41 musicians to a full-strength orchestra of 92 musicians, half of whom are Singaporean, entertaining and inspiring in equal measure along the way.

But while the home-grown orchestra has achieved a lot in a short span of time, observers feel it can do more to up its game and raise the profile of Singapore music.

This, however, does not detract from the fact that the SSO has been responsible for much of the transformation of the classical music scene in Singapore.

Cultural Medallion recipient Vivien Goh was the music director of the Singapore Youth Orchestra from 1980 to 1990 and many of its members went on to play professionally, including with the SSO.

She calls the SSO "an anchor in the cultural landscape", which raised the standard of playing in Singapore and led to the formation of semi-professional orchestras such as the Orchestra of the Music Makers.

Since the orchestra's debut at the Singapore Conference Hall in 1979, under the baton of founding conductor Choo Hoey, it has attracted conductors such as the noted Vladimir Ashkenazy and soloists like cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

It has also been invited to international music festivals such as the BBC Proms in 2014 and its musicians are highly regarded in their own right.

For example, former resident conductor Lim Yau and current co-concertmaster Lynnette Seah have both been awarded Singapore's highest cultural honour, the Cultural Medallion; while Darrell Ang, who was SSO's young associate conductor from 2008 to 2013 was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2015.

Music students from the region aim to join or play with the orchestra.

The SSO's newest members include 20something graduates from the National University of Singapore's Yong Siew Toh Conservatory: trumpeter Lau, Chinese cellist Wang Zihao and Japanese violinist Chikako Sasaki.

Wang, 27, says: "When I was a student and came to the Esplanade to hear the orchestra play, every time I would feel, 'I want to be up there.'"

At home, the orchestra reaches out to more than 80,000 listeners



Musicians fulfilling their dreams with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra include young members (from left) Chinese cellist Wang Zihao, 27, Japanese violinist Chikako Sasaki, 28, and Singaporean trumpeter Lau Wen Rong, 28.
ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

and performs 120 concerts every season. Many are free events, including open-air concerts at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, under Singapore Press Holdings' Gift Of Music series, or performances at local schools.

Music teacher Ruth Rodrigues, 35, was taught by a violinist formerly with the SSO. She recalls sneaking in to SSO concerts at the Victoria Concert Hall when her pocket money ran out. In those days, ticketholders did not have to show an intermission pass to get back in.

"Growing up, the SSO was an inspiration for me," she says. "My wish for the orchestra is to continue to inspire the next generation after me and make people happy through the joy of music."

Beyond the traditional repertoire of Mahler and Beethoven, the

orchestra has its popular SSO Babies' Proms, in which balloons and bright colours attract toddlers. The SSO Concerts for Children might feature musicians dressed up as superheroes (Summon The Superheroes in March last year) or astronauts (An Intergalactic Adventure on March 16 and 17).

Investment analyst Ivy Goh, 41, takes her sons, six-year-old Aiden and four-year-old Austen, to every children's concert. Trained in the piano and violin, she played with the Singapore Youth Orchestra in the 1990s – it was set up as a feeder orchestra for the younger SSO – but never had the benefit of concerts targeting younger age groups.

Her sons can name instruments and recognise composers. Her older son practises the violin for up to an hour by himself. "For my kids, the concert hall is like a play-

ground," she says. "I asked Aiden how he feels after attending the SSO concert and he said, 'I want to practise. I want to follow.'"

While many hold the orchestra in high esteem, some feel it can do more to expand its repertoire and support Singaporean composers in the years to come.

The Straits Times' classical music reviewer Chang Tou Liang says: "What you see today – the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory, the concert halls, the many youth orchestras that exist, the excellent young musical artists, all come as a result of the SSO's 40-year legacy."

However, he adds, the SSO needs to do more to promote Singaporean composers. "We do not know the voice of Singaporean composers simply because the national orchestra does not perform their music enough. This must change."

Fellow Straits Times reviewer Marc Rochester calls the SSO's growth "truly amazing", but is of the opinion that it has focused too much on one particular kind of music: big 19th-century repertory, favouring, say, Mahler symphonies over his predecessor Haydn.

"(The SSO) produces world-class performances of big, romantic music, but wobbles once it moves out of this comfort zone," he says.

He adds that breaking out of this "period of stagnation" will also require changes in the audience's mindset. Listeners here "enjoy spectacular orchestral showpieces rather than the kind of orchestral bread-and-butter which truly tests an orchestra's ability to communicate with its audience", he says.

From 2014 to 2016, the SSO played about two or three works from Singaporean composers a year, including new commissions. Four works were played in 2017 and six last year, thanks to the National Day celebratory concert on Aug 11, which featured five local compositions, including world premieres of Chen Zhangyi's Vanda and Bidasari by Syafiqah Adha Sallehin.

Mr Chng Hak-Peng, the orchestra's chief executive officer, says that in the past, audiences avoided contemporary music from Singaporean composers, but last year's National Day concert filled 83 per cent of the Esplanade Concert Hall and reached nearly 32,000 via livestreaming on Facebook.

"As the national orchestra, we have to enrich the composition space here," he agrees.

Other challenges for the SSO include filling the shoes of long-serving music director Shui Lan, who is stepping down this month. The orchestra is also looking for a new concertmaster to replace violinist Igor Yuzefovich after March.

Mr Chng sees this as an opportunity for the orchestra to grow. This season, it is playing with 10 guest conductors while looking for the right baton for the future.

A greater challenge for the next decade is keeping the orchestra relevant to Singaporeans. To that end, the SSO is aiming to raise \$400,000 in its anniversary year to pay for free or discounted tickets for less well-off students and other underserved communities to attend its concerts.

Mr Chng says: "Locally, it's quite critical whether we can continue to answer the question of what role an orchestra can play in a young country. We know that classical music may not be something that all five or six million people listen to, but can we get them to have a sense of national pride that we have a national orchestra here?"

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BOOK IT / SSO 40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

WHERE: Esplanade Concert Hall,
1 Esplanade Drive
WHEN: Jan 18, 7.30pm
ADMISSION: \$25 to \$98
from sso.org.sg or Sistic
(call 6348-5555 or
go to www.sistic.com.sg)
INFO: www.sso.org.sg

MORE STORIES on D2

FROM D1



Siblings play together in the SSO for almost 30 years

Sisters Karen (left) and Elaine Yeo have been playing together in the Singapore Symphony Orchestra since 1992. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

Trudging home after unwanted piano lessons as children, sisters Karen and Elaine Yeo never dreamed they would end up spending half their lives playing together in the national orchestra.

Karen, 54, joined the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) in 1988 and is the fixed chair double bass.

Younger sister Elaine, 50, is the associate principal playing the English horn, or cor anglais, and also second oboe in that section.

Both credit their musical careers to teenage years spent in the Singapore Youth Orchestra under then music director Vivien Goh. Their late mother, who worked in the then Ministry of Culture, suggested they audition.

"We enjoyed music when we joined the youth orchestra and we had friends there," says Karen. Elaine agrees.

Both of them did not enjoy playing the piano as much because it is a solo instrument. Karen even tried to throw away her books.

When she auditioned for the youth orchestra, the music director urged her to try playing the double bass instead. Karen's 1.72m height made her a perfect candidate for the 2m-tall instrument.

In 1984, after three years playing in the youth orchestra, she went to England on a scholarship offered by the SSO to study the double bass

and piano at the Royal College of Music in London, and later, the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. She joined the SSO on her return in 1988.

Elaine auditioned for the youth orchestra at age 14, asked to play the bassoon, but was told to try the oboe instead.

In 1987, she went to study music

at the University of Manchester and the Royal Northern College of Music.

She did not take an SSO scholarship, thinking to pursue a career out of Singapore, but the lure of home was eventually too strong.

She joined the SSO in 1992 and the sisters have been playing in the orchestra together ever since, except for when they went on maternity leave.

Karen has three children – 16-year-old twins, a boy and a girl, and a daughter aged 14 – and Elaine has a six-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter.

Elaine had her wedding photo shoot in the Victoria Concert Hall, in a tribute to the many years spent there, playing first with the youth orchestra and then with the SSO.

"It was a major part of my life," she says.

"We grew up here," Karen says. "We've come a long way."

Sisters in symphony



SCAN TO WATCH


<http://str.sg/ssosis>

Performing behind the scenes

Pre-concert rehearsals are as important for building officer Mohamed Zailani Mohamed Said as for any musician in the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO).

The 57-year-old is part of the four-person team that sets up music stands and chairs before concerts and checks that the stage lighting is bright enough for musicians to read the score.

He and his colleagues can be seen moving instruments in and out during concerts, perhaps bringing in a piano for a solo performance, or rearranging the stands and chairs as different musical sections come in for certain works.

There is no time for slip-ups or hesitation. Mr Zailani started work in concert operations in 2007 and is proud to say there have been no disasters on his watch.

"We move in, clear instruments, close the gap, musicians come in, chop chop, no room for error," he says.

His team receives a stage plan before each performance and holds backstage discussions where they rehearse how to move, just as musi-

cians rehearse on their own before coming together for a pre-concert rehearsal.

"Rehearsals are very important because we have to know what to do. We have to know how to move. Who is supposed to remove the chairs and close the gap so that the musicians can move in? If we don't know the movement sequence, we're stuck," he says.

Outdoor concerts are more challenging. For the orchestra's regular performances at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, under Singapore Press Holdings' Gift Of Music series, Mr Zailani has to supervise the transport of heavy and delicate instruments as well as oversee hours of physical work during hot and humid afternoons.

Sometimes, the orchestra or some of its musicians perform at local schools and in order to manage these events, Mr Zailani's day starts well before 7am and ends in the evening.

Back at the concert hall, he checks the controlled environment rooms in which musicians store instruments such as violins –

facilities management is also part of his duties.

He enjoys the work and listening in on concerts. Sometimes, his wife watches from the audience. His late father, an army officer, wanted him to be one of the musicians on stage. Mr Zailani used to play the trumpet back in Pasir Panjang Secondary School and also with the Singapore Armed Forces Band.

His father offered to support his musical education, but Mr Zailani refused.

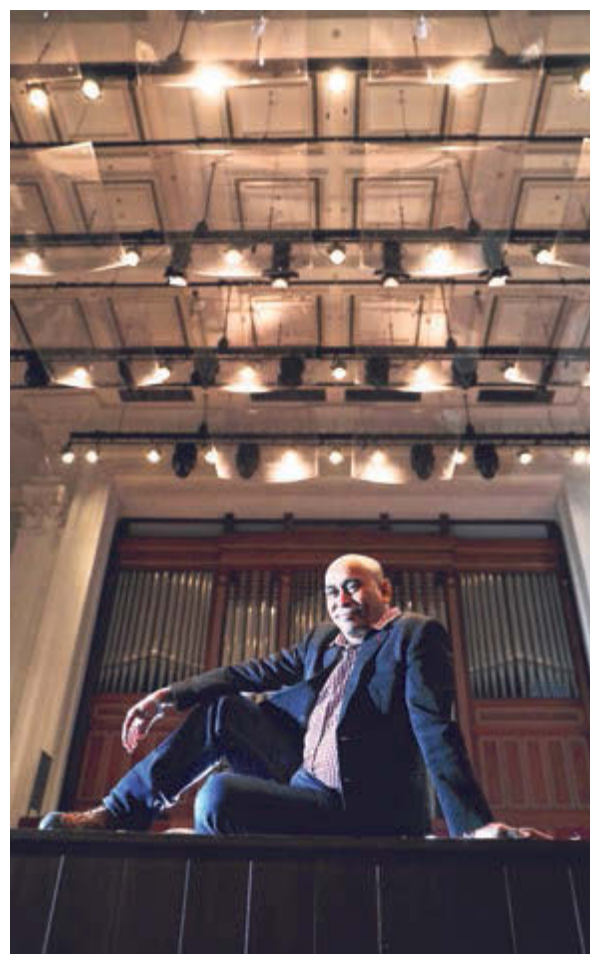
"I didn't think music would be my career," he says. After national service, he worked for more than 20 years on Sentosa, programming and caring for the island's famous Musical Fountain.

He has four grown children who are less musically inclined.

Backstage, listening to the orchestra play, he thinks he feels his father's approval.

"Even though I'm not a musician, I'm the one behind the scenes. He's proud of me up there," he says, smiling.

Akshita Nanda



Building officer Mohamed Zailani Mohamed Said leads the four-person team that sets up the stage before each SSO concert. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

SSO through the years

1973: Dr Goh Keng Swee, then Minister of Defence, suggests in a speech that Singapore needs its own symphony orchestra.

1977: Japanese conductor Yoshinao Osawa starts the semi-professional Singapore Philharmonic Orchestra. Its popularity convinces Dr Goh that there is good public support for music.

1978: The Cabinet agrees to underwrite Dr Goh's plan for a professional symphony orchestra. Singapore Symphonia Co is registered to help set up the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO).

Rehearsals begin in December with eight selected Singaporean musicians and 27 from overseas.



1979: SSO makes its official debut at the Singapore Conference Hall under the baton of founding conductor Choo Hoey (above). The orchestra has 41 musicians, including 13 Singaporeans.



1983: SSO gives its first outdoor concert (above) at the Istana.

1985: SSO goes on its first European tour, covering 10 cities in Scandinavia.

In April, SSO plays its first concert at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, conducted by Lim Yau. **1986:** Concert series New Music Forum is launched to promote Singaporean composers. It runs till 1991, with a brief return in 2001.

1995: Prize-winning Finnish conductor Okko Kamu is appointed principal guest conductor. He stays till 2017.

SSO starts the President's Charity Concert By Young Talents, now called President's Young Performers Concert.

1997: Shui Lan becomes music director.



1999: SSO performs at the National Day Parade for the first time (above).

The orchestra records its first two international albums with Scandinavian label BIS, featuring works by Russian composer Alexander Tcherepnin.

2000: A composer-in-residence scheme is launched with Leong Yoon Pin appointed to create symphonic works for the orchestra. He is succeeded by Er Yenn Chwen (2002), Phoon Yew Tien (2003) and John Sharpley (2004), after which the scheme ends.



2002: The SSO Babies' Proms, a concert series (above) for infants and children up to age six, is launched.

At year-end, SSO performs with celebrated Spanish tenor Jose Carreras.

2005: SSO embarks on its maiden tour to the United States, with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Gil Shaham. The tour includes performances in New York's Avery Fisher Hall and concerts in France and Spain.

2014: SSO performs in the world-famous BBC Proms music festival, playing at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

2016: SSO tours Germany and the Czech Republic, playing at the storied Berlin Philharmonie hall, Dresden Music Festival and Prague Spring International Music Festival.

2017: American conductor Andrew Litton is named principal guest conductor.

This year: It is SSO's 40th anniversary. Shui steps down as chief conductor and music director.

The SSO Red Balloon series is launched. It explores contemporary music from minimalist composer Steve Reich to rock groups Daft Punk and Radiohead.

PHOTOS: SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, ST FILE

Culture Culture

Burning words

A joss paper book project investigates the taboo of incinerating books



Clara Chow

The crickets crank up their mating call just after dusk – a metallic shrilling more like an electrical alarm than local insect life.

Alone, in a little house embedded in the Malayan forest, I can hardly hear myself think. Stuffing wireless music pods into my ears, I keep going, scribbling fragments of prose and poetry on joss paper squares.

I work methodically at a porcelain dining table, with a black Sharpie. Each time I cover a piece of thin, foil-decorated bamboo paper with my spidery cursive handwriting, I seal it in a Ziploc bag, to protect it from the humidity here that turns everything limp.

For a month, in December last year, I lived and wrote at Rimbun Dahan, a private arts centre half an hour by car outside Kuala Lumpur. There, I had the run of a small traditional Malay house called Rumah Balai, in the gated compound owned by Rimbun Dahan's founder, architect Hijias Kasturi and his wife Angela. The project I had come to work on was a joss paper book, meant to be read once by a community, then burnt.

I'd dreamt up this joss paper project a couple of years ago, because I was fascinated with the taboos surrounding book-burning in modern society and the moral depravity or destruction it represented. Think about the Nazis consigning tomes to bonfires at the height of fascist power. Young Red Guards seizing feudal publications to incinerate during the Cultural Revolution.

Closer to home, when parents sent old textbooks up in smoke after their children's exams, in an almost-Bacchanalian excess of celebration, public indignation swiftly followed.

Books rendered into ashes, I have always believed, hurts society in an undefined, indescribable way. The fire(s) which destroyed the Library at Alexandria left a gap in – if not our collective knowledge, then – our imaginations.

A joss paper book, I reasoned, would examine the superstitions associated with the Chinese ancestral worship and funeral ritual of burning joss paper.

Over the past two years, I had lost two aunts to cancer and wondered if writing about them for the project would both pay fitting tribute and exorcise grief. The idea was to have strangers read the pages, in a private contract between writer and reader. No duplicates would be made. Would knowing that they had to burn the pages after reading compel my readers not to forget what they have witnessed? Would this then form a community, in which each person had the responsibility to the next to remember a piece of the whole, so that they might exchange information and make sense of the whole?

It would be a sort of reverse, or self-inflicted, Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel of a society where books were outlawed and burnt.

I bought packets of joss paper from a provision shop in Yishun. At first – remembering Hungry Ghosts Festivals, funerals and death anniversaries – I felt uneasy carrying them around.

An atheist, I had nevertheless been conditioned by my Singaporean-Chinese upbringing to view these rites and materials with respect, suspicion and fear. I left the packet outside my flat, sitting in the corridor with my typewriter whenever I wanted to write on them.

I have since gotten over this fear, but it gives a dimension of taboo to the project.

The pages I write in Rimbun Dahan are of two kinds. Small squares contain impressions of life amid “lush branches” (what the estate's name means in Malay), and musing about craft in this solitary sanctuary. Larger rectangular joss paper tell the complex narrative of my aunt Beautiful Heart's eventful life. Writers burning their own writing is not new. Kenneth Baker in *On The Burning Of Books* catalogues “personal burning”, including Charles Dickens' burning of his letters in a garden bonfire, Thomas Hardy destroying his own notebooks, Jorge Luis Borges buying his earlier books to burn them.

Still, I waver between wanting to

ceremoniously turn these pages into ashes when I'm done, and wanting to – old habits die hard – keep them for posterity. Even if I photographed the pages to document the project, or kept transcripts of the words, the “thingness of the thing” would be irretrievably lost to the flames.

Good, said one part of my brain. That's what writing is, anyway – the ability to let go of your drafts, your imperfect revisions and your exalted products and start from zero with every new story.

Uh-uh, said another part. Bad. A recent New Yorker article on proteomics detailed how scientists used high-tech methods to study proteins on the pages of manuscripts. They found morphine and renal-disease-causing proteins

on the papers of Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov; bubonic plague bacteria on centuries-old Milan death records.

What if, analysing the saved joss pages one day, archivists of the future could discern proteins of the bugs I killed, the dinner of instant noodles and sardines I ate, while I wrote them?

But, I am over-thinking this. The project is what it is, and joss paper – made for burning – must burn.

On Dec 29, last year, about 20 people turn up to read and burn my joss paper poems. We do this at a restored 100-year-old Perak house built by Indonesian-Chinese craftsmen. Each person chooses a poem, or several, to read and burn in an enamel basin. Burning, in the humid night, proves harder than

we think. The paper is too moist to burn properly and it takes effort to keep them alight. Ideas, apparently, are not so easy to kill.

Someone, holding a lighter up to a rolled-cigar of a poem, says: “It feels very sad to do this”. I feel only exhilaration. The ephemerality of these poems serve to confirm that I am alive and will keep writing.

Within half an hour, I am left with a decent pile of ashes.

The next day, I scatter the ashes around Rumah Balai and leave.

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• Clara Chow is the author of story collections *Modern Myths* and *Dream Storeys*.

CULTURAL MEDALLION & YOUNG ARTIST AWARD

The Cultural Medallion and Young Artist Award celebrate the artistic achievements and contributions of individuals who have made a significant impact on Singapore's arts scene.

2018 CULTURAL MEDALLION RECIPIENTS

LOUIS SOLIANO
Mr Louis Soliano, a renowned percussionist and vocalist, whose devotion to his craft has shaped Singapore's jazz scene and inspired generations of musicians.

LOW MEI YOKE
Ms Low Mei Yoke, a bold and imaginative leader in contemporary dance, who has created a unique style that redefines traditions and pushes boundaries.

NOMINATE YOUR CULTURAL HEROES!

Celebrate visionaries in the arts who chart new frontiers and captivate our imagination.

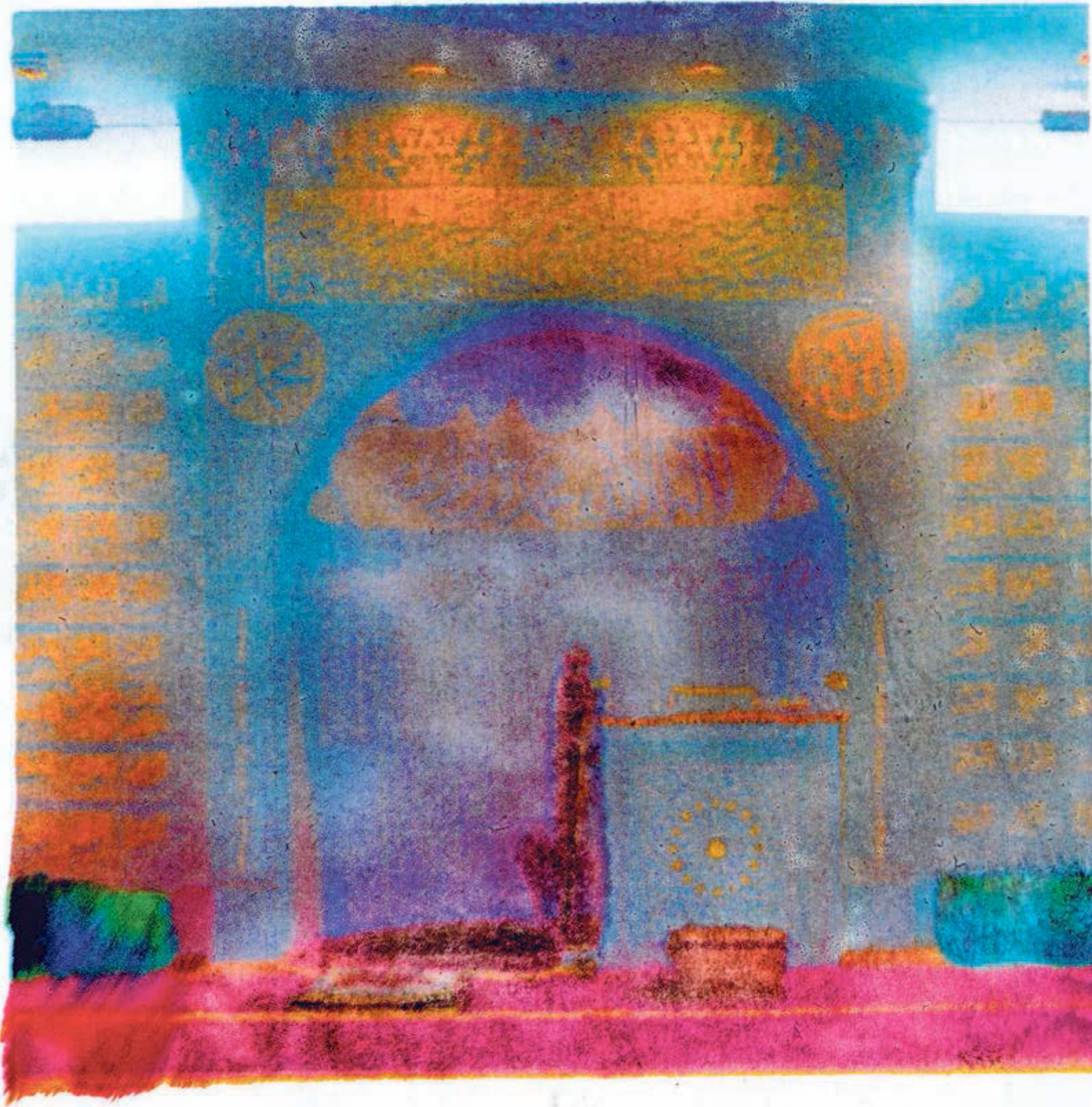
Call for nominations is open until 31 January 2019, 6pm, at www.nac.gov.sg/cmymaa

NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL SINGAPORE



The YTP Reunite exhibition will feature Lavender Chang's series of photographic diptychs (left) of bean sprouts and Masjid 1 (right), a digital print on fabric by artist Noor Iskandar. PHOTOS: LAVENDER CHANG, NOOR ISKANDAR

Bean sprouts and dreamy visions of old Singapore



New exhibition tracks the careers of eight young artists

Toh Wen Li

Before moving to the United States in 2014, light artist Vellachi Ganesan would often go to East Coast Park to watch the sun rise.

Now, she has created an abstract art installation – comprising 17 LED tubes with colour gels in pastel peach, orange, azure blue and pink arranged in horizontal layers – evoking these vivid memories.

“It is a collective of all the sunrises I have seen,” says the 33-year-old artist, who is also a professional lighting designer, and an associate instructor at the University of Utah.

Ganesan is one of eight young artists – presenting an installation each – at the Ion Art gallery from Jan 18 to 27.

The exhibition, titled YTP Reunite 2019, is a collection of recent

works by artists Alecia Neo, Lavender Chang, Ganesan, Hilmi Johandi, Noor Iskandar, Khin Thethtar Latt, Ezekiel Wong Kel Win and Zhang Fuming.

All held solo shows during the first three editions of the Affordable Art Fair and Ion Art's Young Talent Programme, which was launched in 2012 to give young artists born or living in South-east Asia – who do not have gallery representation – a platform to showcase their art.

Every year, 70 to 100 people apply for the programme. Eight are chosen to exhibit their work at the Affordable Art Fair in Singapore, and a final three later embark on a 10-month mentorship programme with veteran curator Seah Tzi-Yan.

The resulting work is displayed at the Ion Art gallery, as part of a showcase called the Young Talent Programme Winners' Solo Exhibitions.

Now, seven years after the launch of the programme, the organisers felt the time was right to hold an exhibition where they could look at how far the artists have come, says curator Seah Tzi-Yan.

All the works are for sale.

“The programme has become a launchpad for the artists involved... they get picked up quite quickly by galleries and museums after this,” adds Ms Seah, who is the director of the arts training and outreach company T.H.E.O. Arts Professionals.

Some artists say the programme raised their profile and gave them the space to realise their creative vision in a nurturing environment.

Having a larger gallery space for their work – and not just three or four walls – encouraged them to “dream big”, says artist and print-maker Zhang, 29.

His installation at Reunite, which features ladders, interrogates the idea of what success means.

These ladders – made from red masking tape, as well as plywood covered with gold paint – appear against a backdrop of charcoal drawings and prints on paper. They look rough-cut or flimsy on closer examination – alluding to the false impressions people might have about success.

“In the modern world, what defines us is our occupations... and there are certain stereotypes involved,” says Zhang, who also works as a courier with food deliv-

ery company Foodpanda.

In the years since they took part in the programme, Neo and Hilmi have received the Young Artist Award – Singapore's highest award for art practitioners aged 35 and below.

As part of Reunite, Neo will present a video as well as several kites bearing images of caregivers and their loved ones performing various gestures.

The idea is to highlight the contributions and needs of those who care for people with mental illness – both from her project Between Earth And Sky, shown at the Objectifs arts space last year.

Hilmi's showcase will feature dreamy visions of Singapore's old amusement parks, part of his President's Young Talents 2018 installation at the Singapore Art Museum.

The humble bean sprout, meanwhile, looms large in a series of photographic diptychs by conceptual artist Lavender Chang first shown at the Alliance Francaise in 2016.

Chang, 35, planted beans – such as green beans, kidney beans, and lentils imported from other countries – near the pedestrian paths of neighbourhoods in Toa Payoh, Ma-

rine Parade, Katong, Clementi and Bedok, where she used to live.

The piece of work is about “searching for a sense of belonging, and the feeling of an outsider wanting to be an insider”, says the Taiwan-born artist.

Ms Yeo Mui Hong, chief executive of Orchard Turn Developments which manages Ion Art, says: “It is heartening to know that our platform has enabled participants to push their creative boundaries and create a name for themselves, from partnerships with art galleries and museums, to winning awards, in Singapore and abroad.”

Meanwhile, Mr Alan Koh, the fair director of the Affordable Art Fair, says the upcoming exhibition “recognises the significance of early engagement with these young artists and the benefits of the framework provided by the programme”.

Ms Seah, the curator, adds: “The attrition of artists is a problem in Singapore – it's not an easy career path. I hope this encourages artists to keep plugging on.”

tohwenli@sph.com.sg

BOOK IT / YTP REUNITE

WHERE: Ion Art, Ion Orchard level 4, 2 Orchard Turn

WHEN: Jan 18 to 27, daily from 10am to 10pm. Artists Talk: Where I've Been, featuring Alecia Neo, Lavender Chang, Hilmi Johandi, Noor Iskandar and Zhang Fuming, will be held at the gallery on Jan 22 at 7.30pm

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: www.ionorchard.com/en/ion-art/exhibitions.html

ZHANG FUMING AND DRAWING PEOPLE

WHEN: Jan 19, 3 to 4pm

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: A charcoal drawing workshop where Zhang will teach the public how to draw people. Go to www.ionorchard.com/en/ion-art/exhibitions.html

Rare books, manuscripts donated to library

Ong Sor Fern
Senior Culture Correspondent

Writer and poet Yong Shu Hoong, 52, recently donated two copies of a limited-edition book to the National Library. The book paired poems from his first book, *Isaac* (1997), with paintings by artist Yee Wai Fong, and only 48 copies were printed.

The two-time winner of the Singapore Literature Prize is also putting together other papers, including handwritten drafts, photographs, and memorabilia, to donate to the library.

Many people think of the donation of materials as a legacy issue, mostly done by artists' estates post mortem, but younger writers are now donating their papers to libraries so that the latter can archive, preserve, and make such material accessible to researchers and academics.

Ms Sharmini Chellappandi, 44, NLB's senior manager, content & services (general reference statutory & digital content), welcomes the moves by younger writers to contribute their personal papers: “Manuscripts, photographs, postcards and letters – compared to pub-



Writer and poet Yong Shu Hoong donated two copies of a limited-edition of *Isaac* to the National Library. PHOTO: SUSAN TSANG

lished books, these materials are unique.”

Donations are also very important, she adds, because “budget is limited. Donations help us fill the gaps in our national collection”.

The National Library already serves as the legal depository for Singapore. Under the National Library Board Act (1995), publishers

have to deposit two copies of every book published in Singapore with the National Library within four weeks of publication.

Writer Ng Yi-Sheng, 38, says he is preparing to donate ephemera, including notebooks and memorabilia from queer-themed literary events he has organised, to the National Library.

He says: “I've got a lot of old memorabilia and paraphernalia lying around, and I'm not keeping them organised. Chances are, sooner or later, they'll get lost unless I donate them to an archive.”

The writer, who won a Singapore Literature Prize for his debut poetry collection *Lost Boy*, adds: “I want my materials to be together with the bulk of Singaporean literary heritage, so that queerness isn't erased from our national narrative.”

Poet Alvin Pang, 45, who is also a photography enthusiast, has amassed photographs and videos of many Singapore literature sessions over the years, including records of some of the first writers' tours in the early 2000s including names such as Pang, Cyril Wong, Aaron Lee and Grace Chia.

Pang has also collected many poetry books by Singaporean and other writers over the years. He says he is planning to bequeath his collection eventually, but has already donated some 30 books to the Yale-NUS library. His audio-visual collection covers about 20 years of Singapore literary activities: “I have material that is rare or unique.

And I feel it should be shared. It's a national resource.”

Such collections are extremely useful to academics and researchers, says Associate Professor Chitra Sankaran, 58, who teaches South-east Asian literature at the National University of Singapore.

She acknowledges that with more authors composing in their computers, the idea of archival research based on earlier drafts is dying a slow death.

Nonetheless, she says, “Manuscripts are useful for archival research purposes in a number of ways. Minimally, manuscripts can provide an interested researcher with insights into authorial intentions, with certain writing practices of the times, and so forth.”

“Different versions of a manuscript can track the path an author has taken in constructing his poem or novel. Manuscripts can also yield important data for several different kinds of researchers from aesthetic, authorial, historical, sociolinguistic points of view.”

She applauds the authors' donations as “good practice” and adds that such moves will contribute to future study and research.

Funny side of a serial killer

The black widow spider inspired Nigerian novelist Oyinkan Braithwaite's dark comedy about a murderer and her sister

Olivia Ho

When Oyinkan Braithwaite decided to write a novel about a serial killer, she did not expect it to turn out funny.

"I didn't want it to be a depressing sort of story," says the Nigerian novelist over the telephone from Lagos, where she lives. "I wanted to keep it light. In trying to achieve that, it seems to have become funny."

In her succinctly titled debut, *My Sister, The Serial Killer*, Lagos nurse Korede tries to stop her beautiful, psychopathic sister Ayoola from murdering her boyfriends and, failing that, helps her get rid of the bodies. But when Ayoola catches the eye of the handsome doctor Korede fancies, Korede is torn.

Braithwaite first got the idea for the book when she read about the black widow spider. The female of the species mates with the males and then, if she is hungry, eats them.

"I tend to prefer to write about strong women," she says. "They are fun to write. Even when they've done something they shouldn't, I like that they're not downtrodden."

Nigeria is still a very patriarchal society, she notes, but the same can be said of societies the world over. "I think women are often underestimated everywhere."

Braithwaite, who studied creative writing and law at Kingston University in London and worked as an assistant editor at Nigerian publishing house Kachifo, was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize in 2016, which brought her to the attention of literary agency Aitken Alexander Associates.

She wrote the novel in "panic mode" in less than a year to meet a deadline. She researched bleach and blood and observed the nurses at the hospital she visits.

"I did not research how to get rid of bodies. It would have been interest-



ing, but I am afraid that if I Google it, somewhere, someone will get an alert."

By the time she turned 30 in March last year, she had two publishing deals and a film option from British production house Working Title, which has been behind films such as *Baby Driver* (2017) and *Bridget Jones's Baby* (2016).

"It was crazy," she says. "I was a little bit scared, it was too much."

While she has not given much thought to what she hopes for in the film, she knows what she does not want to hear: weird Nigerian accents. "We cringe a lot when we see a Nigerian in a Hollywood movie. We don't talk like that. If they could avoid weird accents, I would be immensely grateful."

The novel is coming out in a Nigerian edition as she speaks and she is unsure how her countrymen will react to it.

Nigerian crime fiction may be a growing genre, but hers is not the typical tale of criminals getting their comeuppance. "Nigerians can be really superstitious. Some peo-

ple might just be offended that it's a serial killer."

She remembers being offended herself when she watched American television show *Dexter* (2006 to 2013), about a forensic technician who is secretly a vigilante serial killer. "I thought, they're normalising something quite horrific. Then I did basically the same thing in my book. I don't know what that says about my psyche."

Braithwaite, who is in a relationship, has two younger sisters and a brother. She feels she may have subconsciously drawn on her relationship with the sister closest to her in age – they are two years apart – for the sibling dynamic in the book.

"We clash a lot because we have extremely different personalities," she says of her sister, a loungewear designer. "It's like living with your closest friend, but also wanting to kill her."

oliviaho@sph.com.sg

• Follow Olivia Ho on Instagram @ohomatopoeia



My Sister, The Serial Killer (above) is the debut novel of Oyinkan Braithwaite (top). PHOTOS: AMAAL SAID, ATLANTIC BOOKS

Review

Deliciously wicked crime fiction

FICTION

MYSISTER, THE SERIAL KILLER

By Oyinkan Braithwaite

Atlantic Books/Hardcover/226 pages/\$20.95/Books Kinokuniya

★★★★☆

Olivia Ho

Blood is thicker than water – and harder to get out of the carpet – in Nigerian author Oyinkan Braithwaite's brilliant black comedy about two sisters, one who murders her way through her menfolk and the other who cleans up after her.

The narrator is long-suffering Korede, a nurse at a Lagos hospital whose life is perpetually being interrupted whenever her little sister Ayoola stabs another suitor in "self-defence".

When the book opens, Ayoola has just offed a third lover. Korede must abandon her dinner to dispose of the body and bleach her sister's crime out of existence.

Korede's drive to protect her sister no matter what is tested when Ayoola sets her sights on Tade, the handsome doctor on whom Korede has long nursed an unrequited workplace crush. Whether their affair ends in a happily-ever-after or a homicide, Korede loses.

At first blush, Korede and Ayoola seem to fall into a familiar binary for female characters – beautiful versus plain, ditz versus sensible, "Bratz doll" versus "voodoo figurine", as Korede puts it.

But Braithwaite has an unerring knack for details that flesh out the complexities of sisterhood, where unreserved love can be inextricable from frustration and resentment.

It is the voice of Korede – competent, cynical – that really gives the novel its zing. There are gloriously funny moments of her snatching Ayoola's phone before she can Snapchat a meal or Instagram an outfit, forgetting her social media should be devoted to mourning her latest ex.

The book is not overtly feminist, but nevertheless, there are myriad glimpses of how women navigate a society that, for all its purported modernity, still places authority in men's hands.

In a scene when Korede is stopped by a traffic cop angling for a bribe, she winds down the window a few centimetres, "enough to prevent angering him, but not enough for his hand to slip through and unlock the door", and adopts broken English to soothe his ego.

There is trauma in the sisters' past – their father was abusive, their mother battered and in denial. It would be easy to paint Ayoola as an avenging vigilante for womankind, hurting men before they inevitably hurt her, but Braithwaite never slips into this trope.

Ayoola is both painfully child-like and an insufferable narcissist. Killing is in her nature, and because society has created a facile narrative of women as victims, she is happy to assume it is always someone else's fault.

Deceptively simple and deliciously wicked, this is crime fiction that is a cut above the rest.

If you like this, read: Codename Villanelle by Luke Jennings (Hodder & Stoughton, 2018, \$19.70, Books Kinokuniya), which inspired the BBC American television series *Killing Eve* (2018 to present). Villanelle, a glamorous psychopath who carries out assassinations for a shadowy global cabal, is pursued by MI5 agent Eve Polastri. The two women form a morbid attraction to each other.

Review

Suspenseful start to fantasy series

COMICS

THE PRODIGY: BLADE OF THE CHRYSALIS

By Dave Chua and Koh Hong Teng
Pause Narratives/Paperback/
128 pages/\$19.90/Major bookstores
★★★★☆

Alyssa Woo

Set in a fantasy world inspired by Asian mythology, this work is the first volume in a planned series of six by Singaporeans Dave Chua and Koh Hong Teng.

The story follows former soldier Jaasur, who goes undercover in the city of Chamrouen to rescue a rebel leader who may be able to bring down a ruling tyrant.

In the ensuing chaos, some uninvited guests are sucked into a vortex, which transports them to a safe haven in a hidden temple. They include a boy named Daiyan, who seems to be able to sense the future and has a telepathic connection with his older sister Ulyn. She has been left behind in Chamrouen.

Street urchin Kaidai joins Ulyn in her search for Daiyan, but both are unaware that the ruling forces are preparing a surprise attack on the temple.

This is the third collaboration between Chua and Koh, who have worked together previously on titles such as the graphic novel adaptation of Chua's Singapore Literature Prize-winning novel *Gone Case*.

The linework is confusing, so some scenes and details are lost on me.

In the opening sequence, it is hard to tell if the pool of water Jaasur happens upon in the wilderness is surrounded by melting faces and if the terrain is rocky or filled with lily pads.

It is also not immediately clear what is happening during the rescue-hostage mission and if people are being pulled into a vortex or repelled from it (it turns out to be the former).

Such confusion affects the flow of reading.

Previous works by Koh, who has won accolades including two prizes at the Singapore Book Awards in 2017, are cleaner in style compared with this comic, which is overflowing with scratches that add a sort of savagery to the story.

Koh's level of detail works best in full pages or larger panels, as sometimes there is so much linework squeezed into one panel that the focal point is lost.

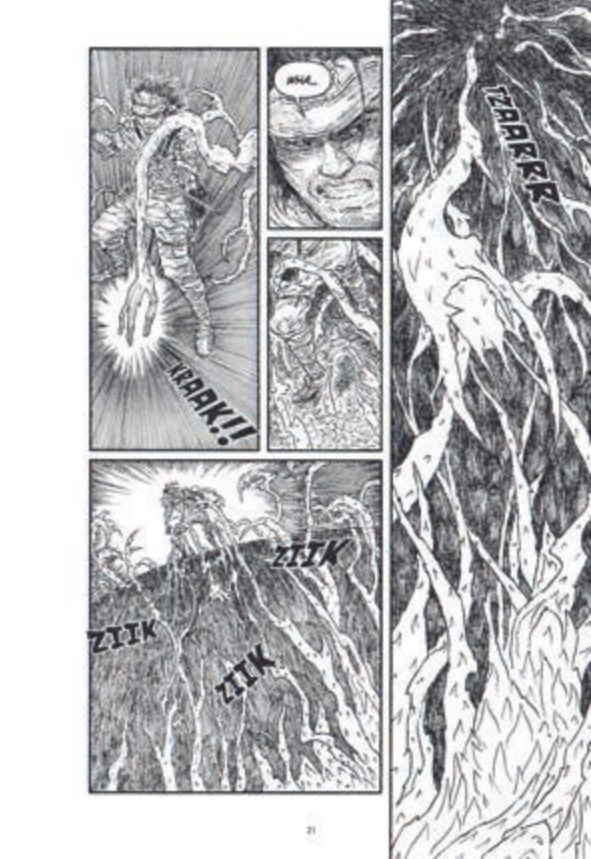
Thankfully, there are sections devoid of background detail, acting as much-needed breath of fresh air.

In terms of pacing, the story is steady and I arrive at the end of the volume much sooner than I expected.

Although the ending is suspenseful, it feels as though this volume serves only to introduce characters.

It is not exactly clear yet what sort of power Daiyan possesses, the kind of parasite that haunts Jaasur and if Kaidai has a bigger destiny in store for him than being a petty thief.

Such unanswered questions will keep the reader hooked on later volumes.



The Prodigy: Blade Of The Chrysalis (left and below) is the first volume in a planned six-parter by Singaporeans Dave Chua and Koh Hong Teng. PHOTOS: PAUSE NARRATIVES

If you like this, read: *Fairy Tail* by Hiro Mashima (Kodansha Comics, 2012, \$16.66, Books Kinokuniya). This epic 63-volume saga follows wizard-dragon slayer Natsu Dragneel and his friends of the Fairy Tail Guild as they journey through the Kingdom of Fiore to snuff out bad guys, including the powerful dark wizard Zeref. However, Natsu may have more in common with Zeref than he realises.



Bestsellers

FICTION

1. (1) *The Next Person You Meet In Heaven* by Mitch Albom
2. (3) *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan
3. (4) *Rich People Problems* by Kevin Kwan
4. (2) *The Travelling Cat Chronicles* by Hiro Arikawa
5. (5) *China Rich Girlfriend* by Kevin Kwan
6. (-) *The Five People You Meet In Heaven* by Mitch Albom
7. (9) *Tuesdays With Morrie* by Mitch Albom
8. (-) *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* by Gordon Doherty
9. (-) *A Dog's Way Home* by W. Bruce Cameron
10. (8) *Fire And Blood* by George R.R. Martin

NON-FICTION

1. (1) *Becoming* by Michelle Obama
2. (3) *This Is What Inequality Looks Like* by Teo You Yenn
3. (2) *The Subtle Art Of Not Giving A F*ck* by Mark Manson
4. (9) *Brief Answers To The Big Questions* by Stephen Hawking
5. (5) *Billion Dollar Whale* by Tom Wright and Bradley Hope
6. (4) *Tall Order* by Peh Shing Huei
7. (8) *The Art Of Thinking Clearly* by Rolf Dobelli
8. (6) *21 Lessons For The 21st Century* by Yuval Noah Harari
9. (-) *Love For Imperfect Things* by Haemin Sunim
10. (10) *Ikigai* by Hector Garcia and Francesc Miralles

CHILDREN'S

1. (-) *Dog Man #6: Brawl Of The Wild* by Dav Pilkey
2. (1) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown* by Jeff Kinney
3. (2) *Dog Man #5: Lord Of The Fleas* by Dav Pilkey
4. (5) *Dork Diaries #13: Tales From A Not-So-Happy Birthday* by Rachel Renee Russell
5. (3) *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes Of Grindelwald – The Original Screenplay* by J.K. Rowling
6. (4) *The Ice Monster* by David Walliams
7. (9) *Roblox Top Adventure Games* by Egmont
8. (8) *Geronimo Stilton #70: The Phantom Bandit* by Geronimo Stilton
9. (10) *Disney Wreck-It Ralph 2* by Bonnier
10. (-) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: The Getaway* by Jeff Kinney

• This is The Straits Times' compilation of bestseller lists from Books Kinokuniya, Times, WHSmith and Popular bookstores.

*Prices shown are per person based on twin sharing in interior Stateroom and include taxes and port charges of \$120 - \$135 per person. Other terms and conditions apply.

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Golden Globes 2019

Bohemian Rhapsody is the champion

It won for best drama and best actor while early favourite A Star Is Born picked up one award for best original song

LOS ANGELES • In a night of upsets, the stars were not all in alignment on Sunday at the Golden Globes ceremony for early favourite A Star Is Born.

While its song *Shallow* picked up best original song (movie), the music soon stopped for film-maker Bradley Cooper and star Lady Gaga who were snubbed for best director and best actress.

Cooper also could not prevent Rami Malek (*Bohemian Rhapsody*) from being crowned best actor in a movie (drama).

Bohemian Rhapsody, a biopic about Queen frontman Freddie Mercury, pulled off another major surprise, walking away with best drama film, besting *A Star Is Born*, box-office superhero hit *Black Panther*, Spike Lee's *BlacKkKlansman* and romantic drama *If Beale Street Could Talk*.

Green Book, a divisive road movie about race relations, was on song too, taking home three trophies, including best comedy and best screenplay.

Mexican film-maker Alfonso Cuarón picked up his third Globe for directing *Roma*, a deeply evocative, semi-autobiographical paean to growing up in 1970s Mexico. He had won earlier in the night for best foreign film.

But there were no prizes for romantic-comedy *Crazy Rich Asians*, the first major Hollywood film in 25 years with an all-Asian principal cast.

Its leading actress Constance Wu and three other nominees were edged out by Olivia Colman for best actress (musical or comedy) while it lost to *Green Book* for best movie (musical or comedy).

It was a big night too for Sandra Oh, who as well as hosting her first

Globe ceremony was named best TV drama actress for BBC America thriller *Killing Eve*.

Oh, who was born in Canada of Asian descent, had earlier paid tribute to a plethora of nominated films and TV shows featuring black and Asian actors and directors, including *Crazy Rich Asians*, *Black Panther* and *BlacKkKlansman*.

"I wanted to be here to look out into this audience and witness this moment of change," said Oh, who won a Globe in 2006 for best supporting actress for her role in TV series *Grey's Anatomy*.

"Right now, this moment is real. Because I see you... all these faces of change. And now so will everyone else."

"*Crazy Rich Asians* is nominated tonight. It is the first studio film with an Asian lead since *Ghost In The Shell* (2017) and *Aloha* (2015)."

The joke was aimed at white actresses like Scarlett Johansson and Emma Stone, who have been slammed for playing characters of Asian descent. After Oh's joke, Stone cheerfully screamed "I'm sorry" from the audience.

Oh's hosting gig is itself a barrier-breaker. She is the first Asian woman to front a major awards show in the United States. But she did not get carried away, noting: "I'm not fooling myself. Next year could be different. It probably will be."

Oh and co-host Andy Samberg opted for a positive vibe, in contrast to the political barbs and sharp jokes, often directed at American President Donald Trump, that have marked recent awards shows.

Samberg also paid tribute to the diversity among the films up for awards.

"And they are not just here



Actor Rami Malek (centre), flanked by Queen's Brian May and Roger Taylor, was crowned best actor in a movie (drama) for his role as the band's frontman Freddie Mercury in *Bohemian Rhapsody*.
PHOTOS: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE, EPA-EFE

tonight because they resonated with audiences Hollywood often ignores," he said. "They are here because they told stories that resonated with everyone."

Globes for supporting acting in movies went to two African-Americans – Regina King (*If Beale Street Could Talk*) and Mahershala Ali (*Green Book*).

The Globes, organised by the Hol-

lywood Foreign Press Association, are the first major show-business awards in the countdown to the Oscars on Feb 24.

In television, the big winners were Cold War spy thriller *The Americans*; new comedy *The Kominsky Method*, which edged out favourite *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel*; and limited series *The Assassination Of Gianni Versace*.

Comedienne Carol Burnett proved her wit was still razor-sharp at 85 when she received an award – named after her – for lifetime achievement in television.

"Does this mean I get to accept it every year?" joked the star of *The Carol Burnett Show*, which was ranked No. 17 in 2013 by TV Guide in its 60 Greatest Shows of All Time list. NYTIMES, WASHINGTON POST, REUTERS

Winners

FILM

- Best drama – *Bohemian Rhapsody*
- Best Comedy or Musical – *Green Book*
- Best Actor (Drama) – Rami Malek (*Bohemian Rhapsody*)
- Best Actress (Drama) – Glenn Close (*The Wife*)
- Best Actor (Comedy or Musical) – Christian Bale (*Vice*)
- Best Actress (Comedy or Musical) – Olivia Colman (*The Favourite*)
- Best Director – Alfonso Cuarón (*Roma*)
- Best Supporting Actor – Mahershala Ali (*Green Book*)
- Best Supporting Actress – Regina King (*If Beale Street Could Talk*)
- Best Animated Film – *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse*

TELEVISION

- Best TV Drama Series – *The Americans*
- Best TV Comedy/Musical Series – *The Kominsky Method*
- Best Actor (TV Drama) – Richard Madden (*Bodyguard*)
- Best Actress (TV drama) – Sandra Oh (*Killing Eve*)
- Best Actor (TV Comedy/ Musical) – Michael Douglas (*The Kominsky Method*)
- Best Actress (TV Comedy/ Musical) – Rachel Brosnahan (*The Marvelous Mrs Maisel*)

SPOTS OF COLOUR ON THE RED CARPET



(From left) Actress Constance Wu; singer-actress Lady Gaga; model Irina Shayk and actor-director Bradley Cooper; actress Lupita Nyong'o; and actress Rachel Brosnahan.

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GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 5 (HD) (IE)
12.30 Secret Meat Business (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 3 (SC)
2.30 Euromaxx (Cul)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
4.00 Meet The MP (HD) (PG) (SC)
4.30 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
6.30 Divided (US) (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
7.30 Tricked (Canada) (HD) (PG) (CC) (V)
8.00 The Carbonaro Effect 4 (PG) (CC) (V)
8.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 FAM (HD) (PG) (CC) (SC)
10.00 It's A Great Great World (PG) (M)
AM
12.00 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Whacked Out Sports (HD) (PG) (V)
12.50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
1.40 This Is Us (HD) (PG13) (D)
2.30 Grimm 5 (HD) (PG13) (D)
3.20 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
3.50 Martha Bakes 5 (HD) (IE)
4.15 Secret Meat Business (IE)
4.40 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 What's In The Fridge? (HD) (V)
7.00 Kids In Charge (V)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)
8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)

9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Are You Up For It? (V)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Food Moments (HD) (CC) (IE)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD) (News)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Train Your Brain (HD) (S)
2.30 Your Hand In Mine (HD) (CC) (D)
3.30 Love Thy Neighbour (PG) (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Emergency! (CC) (V)
8.30 Tuesday Report – Ninety Years Young (CC) (IE)
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)
1.00 Wonderful World 13 (HD) (V)
2.00 Changing Fortunes (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Mysterious Tastes (IE)
4.00 Taste From Home (CC) (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Food Secrets (CC) (IE) (Debut)
10.00 Black Knight (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Food Secrets (CC) (IE) (Debut)
AM
12.30 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Aerial Asia
11.00 News Now

PM
1.02 Why It Matters 2
2.00 News Now
4.02 Aerial Asia
5.00 News Now
7.02 Why It Matters 2
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Real Deal
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Why It Matters 2
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Power List Asia 6
1.02 Real Deal
2.00 News Now
2.30 The Successors 5
3.02 Aerial Asia
4.00 News Now
4.30 Millionaire Minds
5.02 Real Deal
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Azhagiya Snehithi 2 (IE)
4.00 Sundaram Kudumbathinar (HD) (D)
4.30 Enna Nadukuthu 6 (HD) (V)
5.30 Motu Patlu 3 (S)
6.00 Raama Seetha 2
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru 2 (Cul)
7.30 Kutra Kannkaanippu 2018 (HD) (IE)
8.00 Adukku Veetu Annasamy (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Adayaalam (Cul)
10.00 Kannum Kannum Kollaiyadithal (D)
10.30 Bayam (D)
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3 (V)
11.30 Tamil Seithi (Encore) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Flogals (HD) (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
11.30 Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood (HD) (P)

PM
12.00 Bugsville (P)
12.30 Teddies (HD) (IE)
1.00 Little Charmers (HD) (P)
1.30 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
2.00 Flogals (HD) (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
3.30 Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood (HD) (P)
4.00 All Over The Workplace (S)
4.30 Sherazade: The Untold Stories (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Grizzy & The Lemmings (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)
6.30 Don't Try This At Home (HD) (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (S)
8.00 Star Wars Rebels (HD) (CC) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 AFF Suzuki Cup 2018 (HD) (Sports) (Encore)
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.30 The Pickers 11
9.30 History Drama: Vikings 5
10.25 Forged In Fire 5
11.20 Breaking Mysterious
PM
1.10 Ancient Aliens 11/3.00 Pawn Stars 18
3.30 History Drama: Vikings 5
4.25 Forged In Fire 5
5.20 Master & Apprentice
6.15 The Pickers 11/7.10 Pawn Stars 19
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 Ancient Aliens 11
10.50 Breaking Mysterious
AM
12.40 Ancient Aliens 11

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Scraps
10.00 Who Runs The World With Mongchin
11.00 The Best Moment To Quit Your Job
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 Amanda Knox: Murder On Trial In Italy
3.35 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
4.30 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
7.00 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
7.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 The Wrong House
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
AM
12.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
8.05 The Bachelors (NC16)
9.45 Training Day
11.40 The Matrix Reloaded
PM
1.55 A Bigger Splash (NC16)
3.50 Collateral Beauty
5.25 The Time Traveler's Wife
7.10 The Jungle Book
9.00 Darkest Hour/11.05 Eagle Eye
AM
1.00 Mother! (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.00 Saturday Night Fever
9.50 Foxfire/11.25 The Foot Fist Way
PM
12.45 The Others (NC16)
2.30 The River/4.30 Fletch
6.10 Star Wars: Episode VI – Return Of The Jedi/8.25 Killing Gunther (NC16)
10.00 Barb Wire
11.35 Strike Back 2 (M18)
AM
1.15 Shutter (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
9.15 Downy (HD)
10.15 Perfect Dating 6 (HD)/11.45 Hong Kong Neighbourhood Gems (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/1.30 Tomorrow With You (HD)
2.45 Hot Door Night 11
3.45 The Doctor (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/6.00 Downy (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
8.00 Viva La Romance (HD)
10.00 The King's Woman (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
AM
12.00 Destiny By Love

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
6.00 Mubadala World Tennis Championship 2018 Day 3 Finals
9.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
10.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Semi-finals
PM
2.00 Mountain Bike: Enduro World Series 2018: Colombia Highlights
2.30 Tennis: ATP 1000 Nitto ATP Finals 2018 Day 2 Session 1
5.30 Tennis: ATP 1000 Nitto ATP Finals 2018 Day 2 Session 2
8.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Semi-finals
AM
12.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Finals

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.00 National Basketball League Round 12 Adelaide 36ers Vs New Zealand Breakers
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13) (Live)
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Westports Malaysia Dragons Vs Hong Kong Eastern Basketball Team
4.30 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
5.30 National Basketball League Round 12 Illawarra Hawks Vs Sydney Kings
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
8.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
9.00 The Football Review
9.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 San Miguel Alab Pilipinas Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors/11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
1.00 Rugby: HSBC Sevens Series 2018/19 Round 1 Dubai Highlights
2.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Westports Malaysia Dragons Vs Hong Kong Eastern Basketball Team
3.55 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Manchester City Vs Burton Albion (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 Craig Of The Creek
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!/5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence/11.30 Adventure Time
AM
12.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
8.35 MacGyver/9.30 American Ninja Warrior 7/10.25 Valor
11.15 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
PM
12.05 The Amazing Race 30
1.00 MacGyver/1.55 Quantico 2
2.50 American Ninja Warrior 7
3.45 Valor/4.40 The Blacklist 5
5.35 MacGyver
6.30 American Ninja Warrior 7
7.25 Hawaii Five-0 9
8.20 The Amazing Race 30
9.15 Behind The Blacklist 2018 Special
9.45 The Blacklist 6/11.25 Instinct
AM
12.15 NCIS: Los Angeles 8

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
8.30 Supergirl 2
9.20 The Flash 3/10.10 iZombie 4
11.00 Breaking The Magician's Code
11.50 Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows Part 1
PM
2.30 iZombie 4
3.15 Breaking The Magician's Code
4.05 The Flash 3/4.55 Supergirl 2
5.40 Person Of Interest 4
6.30 The Flash 3/7.20 Friends 7
8.10 Breaking The Magician's Code
9.00 Hall Pass/10.45 Batman
AM
12.25 Top 20 Funniest 2/1.15 iZombie 4
2.05 Lethal Weapon 2
3.00 Supergirl 2
4.00 Person Of Interest 4
5.00 Lethal Weapon 2

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 10
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean
8.00 Your Face Or Mine 4
8.25 Most Ridiculous
8.55 Billy On The Street 5
9.15 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.40 Mr Bean
10.10 Most Ridiculous Asia With N.O.C
10.35 Almost Royals
11.05 Saturday Night Live 43
11.50 The Daily Show 24
PM
12.20 Just For Laughs Presents Russell Peters And Friends
1.10 Just For Laughs Gags 14
1.35 Inside Comedy
2.30 Mr Bean
3.00 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.25 Most Ridiculous Asia With N.O.C
3.50 Almost Royals
4.15 Lip Sync Battle 4
5.05 Key & Peele 4
5.30 Key & Peele 5
5.55 The Daily Show 24
6.20 Caraoke Showdown
6.45 Your Face Or Mine 4
7.15 Most Ridiculous
7.40 Billy On The Street 5
8.05 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.30 Just For Laughs Gags 14
9.00 Caraoke Showdown
9.25 Lip Sync Battle 4
10.20 Stand-up, Asia!
11.20 The Fuccons
11.30 The Daily Show 24
AM
12.00 Funny As Hell 4
12.25 Saturday Night Live 43
1.10 Key & Peele 4
1.35 Key & Peele 5
2.00 The Daily Show 24
2.30 Funny As Hell 4
2.55 Most Ridiculous
3.20 Tosh.0 9
4.10 The Fuccons
4.20 Tosh.0 9
5.00 Billy On The Street 5
5.20 Takeshi's Castle 4
5.45 Inglorious Pranksters

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle and Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle and Youngster
AM
12.00 Chronicle Of Love
1.00 Entrepreneurial Age

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 – April 19)

Try to do as little as possible. Things need to settle down before you can make any progress.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Surround yourself with the right people and all is sure to go well for you.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

Put off important communications for a few days. This is not the time for clarity.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

Go beyond the boundaries of your day-to-day life and look into the mysteries that make life so special.

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22)

You know better than to accept everything you see at face value. Try to look at the big news sceptically.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)

Say no to anything new. Things are weird enough without adding more stresses to your life.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)

Use your skills to help others. Offer tips to get those who are close to you back on track.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

Worry a little less about making your fantasies come to life. New opportunities may drop in your lap easily.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Your life is getting weirder every day. You are seeing parallels between a movie and your life.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

You make the right impression on the right person, so much so that you might get an attractive offer soon.

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)

Use a burst of strangeness to rethink issues that mean the most to you. It might shift your perspective.

Pisces (Feb 19 – March 20)

Your energy is perfect for trying out new things, especially bold new projects or ideas.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7:10am/7:13pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 8:45am/9:03pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 1:13am (2.8m), 6:18am (1.6m), 12:01pm (3.1m), 6:41pm (0.5m). Desaru: 12:56am (2.8m), 6:20am (1.9m), 11:13am (2.6m), 6:05pm (0.7m). Port Dickson: 2:09am (0.3m), 7:55am (2.6m), 2:45pm (0.6m), 8:32pm (2.4m). Mersing: 6:35am (2m), 10:51am (2.4m), 5:32pm (0.9m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 1:41am (2.8m), 6:52am (1.6m), 12:35pm (3m), 7:16pm (0.6m). Desaru: 12:44am (2.8m), 6:50am (1.8m), 11:52am (2.6m), 6:39pm (0.8m). Port Dickson: 2:40am (0.3m), 8:27am (2.5m), 3:10pm (0.5m), 8:59pm (2.4m). Mersing: 12:51am (3.3m), 7:07am (1.9m), 11:33am (2.4m), 6:05pm (1m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

GoAheadQuoteMe



I think it's better for it to just be once in a while, even though they've been very good experiences.

ACTRESS PENELOPE CRUZ on working with her husband, fellow actor Javier Bardem



I think I saw my kids a total of five days all summer. It was terrible.

ACTOR BILL HADER on his busy acting schedule



Growing up, I never wanted that to be a part of my story... I always wanted to do it myself and for myself.

ACTRESS LILY COLLINS on being the daughter of famous musician Phil Collins

Aquaman reigns at No. 1 for a third week

LOS ANGELES • Escape Room, a horror thriller from Sony, opened as the first big movie release of this year and landed in second place, behind the Warner Bros superhero movie Aquaman, now in its third week.

The Sony Pictures film about six strangers who get mysterious invitations to a new, immersive escape room collected US\$18 million (\$\$24.4 million) in its debut, according to Sunday estimates from Comscore.

That beat Box Office Pro's projection of US\$13.6 million. The movie cost just US\$9 million to make, according to data from Box Office Mojo, and about half of critics recommended it on Rotten Tomatoes.

January is historically a slow month for theatres and a time when smaller distributors can get exposure for their releases.

Entertainment Studios, STX Entertainment, Aviron and LD Entertainment have new movies slated for theatres this month. Of the

major studios, only Sony, Universal Pictures and 20th Century Fox have new pictures on the schedule.

That gives Christmas holdovers a chance to rake in a few more dollars. Aquaman easily retained its No. 1 spot, pulling in a solid US\$30 million for a domestic haul of US\$259 million.

The DC superhero adventure directed by James Wan and starring Jason Momoa has now crossed US\$940 million worldwide, making it Warner Bros' biggest comic-book title since The Dark Knight Rises amassed more than US\$1 billion globally in 2012. If Aquaman continues at this pace, Arthur Curry could give Batman a run for his money.

Aquaman generated another US\$56.2 million in foreign markets over the weekend, bringing its international total to US\$681 million.

The Atlantean blockbuster has nabbed the distinction as DC's highest-grossing title overseas, surpassing the record set by The Dark Knight Rises with US\$636 million.

Disney's Mary Poppins Returns was neck and neck with Escape Room for the No. 2 slot, though Sunday estimates show Mary Poppins Returns coming in third with US\$15.8 million during its third weekend of release.

The sequel to the 1964 classic has earned US\$138 million at the domestic box office. The movie starring Emily Blunt and Lin-Manuel Miranda has been a slow burn in theatres, which is to be expected for a movie-musical.

Mary Poppins Returns has collected US\$119 million internationally and more than US\$250 million globally, though it will need to keep chugging along at multiplexes to justify its US\$130-million price tag.

Elsewhere in moviegoing, Paramount's Bumblebee and Sony's Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse are in a close race for fourth and fifth place. Both titles pulled in roughly US\$13 million over the three-day frame, according to estimates.

Hailee Steinfeld stars in Bumblebee, the Transformers origin story that has made US\$97 million since debuting just before Christmas.

Meanwhile, the domestic haul of Spider-Verse, an animated flick from Sony's arsenal of Marvel characters, sits at a robust US\$133.8 million.

Sony's Holmes & Watson, a Christmas Day release, continues to struggle. Despite featuring the comedic duo of Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly, the movie made US\$3.4 million over the three-day stretch for a tepid North American total of US\$28.4 million.

Overseas, the buddy comedy based on the famed detective and his trustee sidekick has made a dismal US\$7 million, bringing its worldwide bounty to US\$35 million.

It holds an 8 per cent average on Rotten Tomatoes, so it might not be a mystery if Holmes & Watson fails to recoup its US\$40-million budget. BLOOMBERG, REUTERS

Sex assault scandals



Actress Ke Huan-ru (above) shared on Facebook the inappropriate behaviour of a director widely believed to be Doze Niu (right) on Sunday. Niu was accused of sexually assaulting a female crew member last month. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, FACEBOOK/KE HUAN-RU



Taiwanese actress recounts upsetting bed scene

TAIPEI • Taiwanese actress Ke Huan-ru has disclosed on Facebook her humiliation over a bed scene in a movie 12 years ago.

According to reports, she was forced to strip naked in the scene

with director Doze Niu while filming What On Earth Have I Done Wrong?! in 2007.

Niu, 52, was accused last month of sexually assaulting a female crew member of a movie that he was shooting. He is now out on bail.

The alleged assault revived memories of the 2007 incident and Ke, 38, broke her silence on Facebook on Dec 25 and urged netizens to show concern to victims of sexual assault.

She said in a second post on the same day that she had the opportunity to "gaze at the wound again" after 11 years and would regret it if she remained silent.

She recounted the 2007 incident in a Facebook post on Sunday and accused a director, widely believed to be Niu, of inappropriate behaviour while filming the scene.

She said she did not discuss how

to film it with him due to his vast experience as a director.

She added in the post that as he was both director and leading actor of the movie, she could not ask to stop the filming, even though she felt uncomfortable during the scene.

She said that after filming, she felt "dirty and desperately wanted to wash away the touch, the memory, all of it".

She added that she was still traumatised two days after the incident and sought help from friends through writing as she could not bring herself to talk about the incident.

She said she felt hurt a second time after the bed scene was deleted from the final version of the movie.

"If the film could be presented in this way, then was it really neces-

sary to sacrifice so much to complete it?" she asked.

She said the director apologised profusely to her after the incident, but she doubts his sincerity due to some of the words he said after the apology.

Ke rose to prominence after a supporting role in the television serial Meteor Garden (2001), which starred Jerry Yen, Vic Chou, Ken Chu and Van Ness Wu.

She disclosed in an interview with Apple Daily last year that she was divorced after a four-year marriage. Her ex-husband is not from the entertainment industry.

Niu is famous for directing Monga (2010), a gangster flick set in 1980s Taipei which starred Ethan Juan and Mark Chao. The movie won three Golden Horse Awards in 2010, including Best Actor for Juan.

Kevin Spacey due in court over claims

NEW YORK • Actor Kevin Spacey was due yesterday to appear before a judge on the tiny destination island of Nantucket, Massachusetts, over accusations that he sexually assaulted a teenager in 2016.

The House Of Cards star had asked that his lawyers represent him at the hearing, but Judge Thomas Barrett declined the request.

The formal charges come more than 13 months after the complaint was filed and are part of the latest chapter in the #MeToo movement after the sentencing of actor Bill Cosby and the indictment of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

The case marks the first time Spacey, 59, has faced charges, although there are dozens of claims against him. He faces five years in prison if charged with sexually assaulting William Little, who was 18 at the time of the alleged incident in July 2016 at a Nantucket restaurant.

Little had been working as a busboy for the summer at the restaurant.

The two-time Oscar winner – for his supporting role in Usual Sus-

pects in 1996 and his lead role in American Beauty in 2000 – told the judge in a letter that he intends to plead not guilty.

Spacey, who was forced out of public life by accusations of sexual misconduct in 2017, posted a video online last month of himself speaking about allegations of sexual abuse in the character of Frank Underwood, the scheming politician he played in House Of Cards before the show dropped him.

The message has several levels of interpretation, evoking both the destiny of Underwood, the lead character written off the show, and the claims against Spacey.

"You wouldn't believe the worst without evidence, would you? You wouldn't rush to judgments without facts, would you? Did you? No, not you. You're smarter than that," Spacey said in the video.

"Of course, some believed everything and have been just waiting with baited breath to hear me confess it all. They're just dying to have me declare that everything said is true and that I got what I deserved.

"Only you and I both know it's never that simple, not in politics and not in life."

Spacey was considered one of the finest actors of his generation, but his career nosedived following allegations of sexual misconduct by more than a dozen men in the United States and Britain.

Besides the Nantucket case, two other investigations are under way in Los Angeles and London, where he served as artistic director of the prestigious Old Vic theatre from 2004 to 2015.

The first public report of alleged abuse by him came from actor Anthony Rapp, who claimed that Spacey sexually abused him when he was 14 in 1986.

Spacey has not appeared on screen or on stage since Rapp came forward.

Director Ridley Scott even removed Spacey from his film All The Money In The World (2017) by shooting all scenes in which the actor appeared again with another star, Christopher Plummer.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LEADING INSPIRE

THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018

PRESENTED BY

The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year award, organised in partnership with UBS for the fourth year running, seeks to honour the positive impact made by Singaporeans and celebrate the triumph of the human spirit

Annabelle Kwok
At 26, NeuralBay founder Annabelle Kwok has already made her mark in artificial intelligence. She also wears many other hats as mathematician, hardware hacker, sportswoman, arts performer and do-gooder.

FINALIST

Read about the other finalists at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the Singaporean of the Year 2018 by Jan 15, 6pm

Cast your vote now at str.sg/soty18vote

Terms and conditions apply

B| HOME



FOO CHEE HOCK
SINGAPORE JUDICIAL COLLEGE
DEAN WHO IS ONE OF FOUR
NEW SENIOR COUNSELS B6



Tampines Meridian Junior College students watching as the old flags of Tampines JC and Meridian JC were lowered on the first day of school yesterday.

Merged JCs mark new beginnings

At TMJC, students and staff come together for flag raising, breakfast and football match

Jolene Ang

The first day of school is often filled with a mixed bag of emotions, from apprehension to anticipation.

For the JC2 cohort at Tampines Meridian Junior College (TMJC) yesterday, it was also a day to remember as the new merged school started its first academic year.

When The Straits Times visited during morning assembly, students and staff sang the National Anthem and recited the Pledge with their fists over their hearts.

But there was no singing of the school song, which has not been written.

They watched in silence as the flags bearing the crests of Tampines JC and Meridian JC were lowered, before the new TMJC flag was hoisted.

TMJC principal Pamela Yoong told the students it was "a reminder to all of us that we carry the her-

itage and culture of two parent colleges".

Aside from TMJC, located at the premises of Meridian JC in Pasir Ris, the other merged JCs are: Anderson Serangoon JC, Jurong Pioneer JC and Yishun Innova JC.

The mergers of the eight colleges, announced by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in April 2017, were due to Singapore's falling birth rate.

MOE also said last January that the merged JCs would bear the original names of both colleges, with the older college's name coming first.

TMJC student Abdul Qayyum Zaki Zulkifli, 17, said he was excited for the year ahead.

"On our first day of school last year, we were introduced to the school facilities and culture - the seniors from both colleges performed a flash-mob dance for us," he said.

But this year, the JC2 students had a "pleasant surprise".

[SHAPE JC CULTURE](#) continued on B2



The TMJC flag and state flag being raised. Students will get to shape the college's new culture, with the school song yet to be written. ST PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN

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Govt to run ElderShield scheme from 2021

It will take over from three private insurers, enabling smoother switch to CareShield Life

Rei Kurohi

The Government will run ElderShield from 2021 after reaching an agreement with Aviva, Great Eastern and NTUC Income, the private insurers currently administering the insurance scheme for people with severe disabilities.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Health (MOH) said the Government will operate the scheme on a not-for-profit basis.

"In the event that the actual claims experience turns out better than expected, there will continue to be premium rebates for ElderShield policyholders."

With the change, MOH said ElderShield policyholders will be able to make the switch to CareShield Life more smoothly. The private insurers are currently

serving 1.3 million policyholders. CareShield Life, a new compulsory government-run scheme, will be implemented from 2020 for everyone between the ages of 30 and 40. It is intended to replace the optional ElderShield scheme.

Existing cohorts born in 1979 or earlier with ElderShield have the option of switching to CareShield Life from 2021 as well, when the Government takes over running of the ElderShield scheme.

The ElderShield Review Committee, which had in January last year recommended the Government run the ElderShield scheme, welcomed the announcement.

The committee's chairman, Mr Chaly Mah, encouraged the three private insurers to work with the Government to ensure a smooth transfer.

"We had earlier noted in our report that there is value for all ElderShield and CareShield Life policyholders to be serviced by the same administrator to ensure consistency in policy administration," he said.

With the Government running the scheme, Mr Mah said that the improvements in claim processes that the committee recommended for CareShield Life can now also be implemented for ElderShield as well.

This includes a new assessment framework that takes cognitive impairments into account.

The improvements will benefit even those who choose not to switch to CareShield Life. They will continue to be covered under their current ElderShield policies.

The private insurers will continue to issue new ElderShield policies and serve existing policyholders until 2021.

More information will be made available to policyholders closer to the date of the transfer, MOH added.

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Operator of pet facility arrested amid AVA probe

Choo Yun Ting

The operator of pet boarding facility Platinum Dogs Club has been arrested by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA).

In a Facebook post yesterday, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and National Development Sun Xueling said the operator is assisting with investigations into alleged animal welfare offences. She did not name the operator.

Ms Sun confirmed to The Straits Times that a 30-year-old woman was arrested on Sunday.

ST understands the woman is being held at Tanglin Police Division.

"The AVA is continuing investigations into the Platinum Dogs Club," said the MP for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC. The authorities will take enforcement action on any animal welfare infringements, she added.

Several pet owners who boarded dogs with Platinum Dogs Club have also been reunited with their pets. AVA had taken the dogs into temporary custody to safeguard their welfare after a raid on the facility.

In her post, Ms Sun called for calm. "Let the authorities investigate the case thoroughly and fairly," she said.

The pet boarding house in Bukit Panjang was raided by the authorities on Dec 29 and 31 after complaints that pets in its care were mistreated. AVA later took temporary custody of animals found there.

On Jan 2, a group of dog owners gathered outside Platinum Dogs Club, demanding information on a missing shetland sheepdog.

A 40-year-old man in the group was taken to Ng Teng Fong General Hospital for outpatient treatment after being hit by a car that the operator of the facility was in. The group of 11 had remained in the car's path



A woman believed to be Platinum Dogs Club's owner at the facility last week. The authorities raided the place last month after complaints of pet mistreatment. ST FILE PHOTO

as it reversed, despite police advising them to give way for their safety.

In a joint statement with AVA on Jan 5, the authorities said that the group were assisting police with investigations.

Under the Animals and Birds Act, those who fail in their duty of care towards animals in the course of conducting an animal-related business face a maximum fine of \$40,000 and/or a jail term of two years if convicted.

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SEE FORUM B9

O-level results out next Monday

Candidates who sat last year's GCE O-level examinations will get their results next Monday.

Students may collect their results from their respective schools at 2pm that day, while private candidates will be notified by post, the Ministry of Education (MOE) said in a statement yesterday.

The result slips of private candidates will be mailed next Monday to the address provided during the registration period.

Private candidates can also ob-

tain their results online using their SingPass account on the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board website.

Students who wish to apply to the junior colleges, Millennia Institute, the polytechnics or the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) can do so through the Joint Admissions Exercise (JAE).

The JAE will open from 3pm next Monday to 4pm on Jan 18.

Applicants may refer to the JAE website for more details.

The MOE said the JAE posting results are due to be released on Jan 31.

The results can be accessed on the JAE website or through an SMS that will be sent to the applicant's mobile phone.

Those posted to the junior colleges and Millennia Institute will have to report to their posted institutions on Feb 1, while those posted to the polytechnics or the ITE will receive a letter on their enrolment details.

Ng Huiwen

PREMIUM REBATES

In the event that the actual claims experience turns out better than expected, there will continue to be premium rebates for ElderShield policyholders.



MINISTRY OF HEALTH



Clockwise from far left: TMJC student Clement Choo giving an apple to teacher Yeo-Chen Zhiling as a sign of appreciation; the school's friendly football match; and students having breakfast yesterday. ST PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Students to help shape school identity

FROM B1

Instead of jumping straight into lessons, the 850-strong cohort gathered in the canteen after assembly for a communal breakfast provided by the school, where they munched on pastries, cookies and fruit, washed down with chilled Milo.

English literature teacher Wee Liang Tong, who is also the school staff developer, said this was a tradition from Tampines JC.

"This is our way of showing care for the students. Even if it's not breakfast, we will do it through

some other ways throughout the year," Mr Wee, 44, added.

The school also watched a football match between the male students and staff, on TMJC's newly re-turfed pitch.

Qayyum, the school's student council president who also played in the match, said: "This made us see the teachers in a different light."

"They are always in the classroom but today, the game was something new for us to enjoy."

"Even students and teachers who were not playing were cheering on the sidelines."

For General Paper (GP) teacher Tan Ju Ling, 32, the day reminded her of her JC experience.

She was among the second batch to attend Meridian JC in 2004, when everything was relatively new.

She was an English literature student under Mr Wee then, and began teaching in Tampines JC after university.

"I looked forward to the merger because TMJC is not a new environment and so it's easy for me to assimilate. I had a lot of good memories in Meridian," she said.

The school will also be giving uni-

forms – one top, two bottoms and one set of physical education attire – free to each JC2 student.

The new uniforms were designed with input from students and staff.

Some sitting the A-level exams this year have to adapt to new tutors.

Student Jolin Teo, 17, who has a new form teacher and GP teacher, said: "We see it more as a fresh experience. I believe the new teachers can guide us well."

While the new batch of JC1 students will start school only next month, they will have a hand in shaping the college's new culture,

as the school song, mission, vision and values have yet to be decided.

The house system, which is used to group students during intra-college student activities, will also need to be revamped.

Ms Yoong said she would involve the new batch in making these decisions, as she wanted the school identity to be owned by all.

"I don't want to set rigid parameters because I want to open the offer to students to dream and create for themselves," she said.

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Proposal for Singapore F-15 jet training in NZ scrapped

Decision comes after two years of talks between both countries

Lim Min Zhang

A proposal for Singapore's F-15 fighter jet training to be conducted in New Zealand on a long-term basis will not be taking off, said the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) yesterday.

The decision follows nearly two years of discussions between the two countries, and confirms a New Zealand media report last month that the plans have been scrapped due to "excessive costs".

In response to media queries, Mindef said the ministry and the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) appreciated New Zealand's support in assessing the feasibility

of a long-term fighter training detachment in Ohakea, Manawatu, on the North Island.

"Both sides have mutually concluded that the proposal will not proceed. Singapore and New Zealand will continue to look for new opportunities to cooperate on defence and security activities," added the ministry, without specifying reasons behind the decision.

In the report on New Zealand-

based news website Newsroom on Dec 21, New Zealand's Defence Minister Ron Mark was quoted as saying that both countries had agreed not to go ahead with the plan.

Locating Singapore's F-15s at Ohakea on a long-term basis was "not feasible without significant investment to alleviate the strain operations would place on the capacity of the airfield and the airspace above it", said Mr Mark,

adding that Singapore agreed that the costs were an important factor in the final decision.

He said New Zealand may yet host Singapore's fighter aircraft for short periods.

Mindef had been looking at the possibility of deploying fighter jets in New Zealand for pilot training since February 2017.

Last March, Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen and Mr Mark said at the second annual Singapore-New Zealand Defence Ministers' Meeting in Auckland that New Zealand would continue to evaluate the proposal.

Mindef added that Singapore and New Zealand are close defence partners and share a long history of operational and training cooperation.

Singapore has a detachment of F-15s based at the Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho in the United States.

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The programme sought to increase awareness of the corporate insurance industry and groom female leaders. The company's regional CEO for the Asia-Pacific, Mr Mark Mitchell, 51, added that it was also a way to better understand what Rakshana and her peers were looking for in their future employers.

Sec 4 student Jaburooth Rakshana with Mr Mark Mitchell, Allianz Global Corporate and Specialty's (AGCS) regional CEO for Asia-Pacific, whose office she took over for the day. With them are Ms Irene Yeo (at far right), regional head of planning and performance management in AGCS' finance team; and Ms Wendy Koh, the firm's regional head of marketing and communications for Asia-Pacific. ST PHOTO: JOSEPH CHUA

Teen 'earns' \$2.7m profit for insurer as CEO for a day

Sarah Lok and Claire Tan

Fifteen-year-old Jaburooth Rakshana "made" a profit of \$2.7 million yesterday, by underwriting several cases that insured clients from potential risks, such as piracy at sea and accidents in shopping malls, among other possible hazards.

She was playing chief executive officer for the day at Allianz Global Corporate and Specialty, a corporate insurance company, in a student-CEO swop organised with her school, St Margaret's Secondary School.

The Secondary 4 student had beaten 19 of her peers across the Normal (Technical), Normal (Academic) and Express streams in a

competition to win the position.

The programme sought to increase awareness of the corporate insurance industry and groom female leaders.

The company's regional CEO for the Asia-Pacific, Mr Mark Mitchell, 51, added that it was also a way to better understand what Rakshana and her peers were looking for in their future employers.

When Rakshana arrived for work in the Marina Downtown area, she met her personal assistant, Ms Gina Ismail, and took over Mr Mitchell's office for the day.

She learnt about the basics of the insurance industry, and chose cases to insure.

The cases ranged from insuring a telecommunications company for

cyber risks to fire and earthquake damage at a paper manufacturer.

She also suggested staff welfare initiatives, such as holding a sports carnival and activities like archery and coding.

At the end of the day, Rakshana learnt how her insured cases fared. For instance, a ship she insured ran into pirates in the Gulf of Aden, while burst pipes in a shopping mall that she insured resulted in a collapsed ceiling.

She then spun a wheel - representing the element of luck - that determined the amount of money the company had to pay its clients.

Fortunately, she still came out on top, as the premiums earned were higher than the claims.

Mr Mitchell had earlier last August joined the school for lessons. The principal of St Margaret's Secondary, Madam Lee Lin Yee, 40, said the role-swap highlighted the importance of learning continuously, regardless of one's profession.

Rakshana felt proud of herself for doing her best.

"This whole day is going to be with me forever," she said.

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Money mule jailed 4½ years

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A money mule working for an international syndicate that is behind scams involving police impersonation travelled to Singapore 14 times in 2017 to collect and transfer criminal proceeds totalling almost \$760,000.

Tan Kim Hui, a 24-year-old Malaysian, was sentenced to 4½ years' jail yesterday for his role in the offences, committed between April and July 2017.

He pleaded guilty in October last year to five counts of abetment by conspiracy to help his accomplices retain the benefits of criminal conduct involving more than \$670,000. Nine other similar charges involving the remaining amount were taken into consideration during sentencing.

Tan was introduced to the syndicate in early 2017 and took instructions from a fellow Malaysian known only as Ole.

As part of the scam, a fraudster would contact a victim and, pre-

tending to be a police officer, claim the person was being investigated for various offences.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Foo Shi Hao said: "The scammer will then deceive the victim into handing over control of the victim's bank account... Money will be withdrawn from the victim's bank account and delivered to 'money mules', who collect the money and deliver it to the scammers.

"Sometimes, these victims are tricked by the scammers into helping the scammer transfer monies in the belief that they were assisting police investigations. Such victims are known as 'victim-mules'."

DPP Foo added that Tan was tasked to travel to Singapore to collect and transfer proceeds of the syndicate's cheating activities. Tan said the syndicate paid him between RM200 (\$66) and RM1,500 for each trip here.

The court heard that one victim was duped into parting with almost \$50,000 in cash, which was handed to a victim-mule before Tan arrived in Singapore on May 9, 2017 to

collect it. Tan then passed the money to Ole in Malaysia.

Tan committed similar offences involving almost \$300,000 in July 2017. On July 12 that year, he arrived in Singapore with an alleged accomplice known as Lay Guo Zheng to collect almost \$265,000. A week later, they met a third man, Gerald Yap, in Johor Baru and the trio came here.

Lay allegedly collected \$50,000 from an unknown person in Chinatown, while the other two men acted as look-outs.

The trio then went to Yishun, where Lay allegedly collected an ATM card from a victim-mule and withdrew \$8,900.

They returned to Malaysia and handed the cash to Ole.

Yesterday, defence lawyer Ashwin Ganapathy pleaded for Tan to be sentenced to 4½ years' jail, stressing that his client was "immature and impressionable" when he committed the offence.

Yap has been dealt with, while the case involving Lay is still pending.

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Assorted
60g x 75g
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Potato Chips
Assorted
184.2g
U.P. \$4.60**SAVE 9%****\$4.45**LYNFERRO
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Chocolate
120g
U.P. \$4.90**\$7.10**BAN HOCK
Almond Cake
300g**SAVE 10%****2 FOR \$5.25**KLEENEX
Soft Pack
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Deluxe Facial Tissue Box
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Cat Food
Assorted
70g
U.P. 8 for \$10.80**SAVE 24%****\$5.95**H&E
Mandarin Oranges
12s x 500ml
U.P. \$7.85**SAVE 8%****\$10.95**TATSUDA
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U.P. \$11.95**SAVE 57%****2 FOR \$3**Ella's Kitchen
Smoothie
Assorted
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5s x 500ml**\$6.25**VITAGEN
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U.P. 2 for \$4.70**SAVE 13%****2 FOR \$4.55**FRUIT TREE FRESH
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Assorted
1L
U.P. 2 for \$5.20**SAVE 20%****2 FOR \$9.95**LURPAK
Butter
Salted/Unsalted
200g
U.P. 2 for \$12.40**SAVE 33%****\$1.35**YEO'S
Juscool
Sparkling Apple
1.5L
U.P. \$2**SAVE 22%****\$5.95**SEASONS
Asian Drink
Pi Eah Cha
12s x 325ml
U.P. \$7.65**SAVE 42%****\$5.95**YEO'S
Ice Green Tea
24s x 250ml
U.P. \$10.30**SAVE 28%****\$7.20**MARIGOLD
Asian Drinks
Chrysanthemum Tea
24s x 250ml
U.P. \$10**SAVE 28%****\$7.20**MARIGOLD
Asian Drinks
Lemon Barley
24s x 250ml
U.P. \$10**SAVE 24%****\$7.95**POKKA
Asian Drink
Green Tea
24s x 250ml
U.P. \$10.40**SAVE 20%****\$11.50**POKKA
Carrot Juice
24s x 250ml
U.P. \$14.40**SAVE 18%****\$12.80**100 PLUS
Isotonic Drink
Regular
24s x 325ml
U.P. \$15.70**SAVE 4%****\$12.95**F&N
Variety Pack
24s x 325ml
U.P. \$13.45**SAVE 3%****\$13.75**MILO
Tonic Food Drink
24s x 200ml
U.P. \$14.20**SAVE 33%****\$17**BRAND'S
Essence Of Chicken
10s x 41ml
U.P. \$25.50**SAVE 33%****\$17**BRAND'S
Essence Of Chicken
With Cordyceps
10s x 41ml
U.P. \$25.50**SAVE 20%****\$19.90**RAWSON'S RETREAT
Wine
Assorted
750ml
U.P. \$24.90**SAVE 18%****\$45.90**BAILEY'S
Irish Cream
700ml
U.P. \$55.90**SAVE 7%****\$98.90**MARTELL
Cognac
VSOP
Red Barrel
700ml
France
U.P. \$106.50**SAVE 22%****\$3**STOCK
Mint Chocolate
200g
U.P. \$3.85**SAVE 50%****\$4.45**CADBURY
Roses
Chocolate
25g
U.P. \$8.90**SAVE 18%****\$6.95**LEE KUM KEE
Panda Oyster Sauce
2s x 770g
U.P. \$8.90**SAVE 26%****\$10.80**LEE KUM KEE
Premium Oyster Sauce
2s x 510g
U.P. \$14.50**SAVE 5%****\$7.95**DARLIE
Toothpaste
Assorted
180g - 250g
U.P. \$8.40**SAVE 15%****\$18.60**MAMYPKO
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Assorted
U.P. \$21.90**SAVE 15%****\$19.55**TENA
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U.P. \$22.50**\$4.95**MAMA LEMON
Dishwashing
Liquid Detergent
Regular/Lemon Gold
4s x 600ml**SAVE 3%****\$5.95**MAMA LEMON
Dishwashing Liquid Detergent
Original/Lemon Gold
1L
U.P. \$6.15**SAVE 4%****\$6.60**MAMA LEMON
Anti-Bacterial
Citrus/Green Tea
1L
U.P. \$6.85**SAVE 18%****\$6.95**DETTOL
Multi-Surface Cleaner
Assorted
2.5L
U.P. \$8.45**SAVE 11%****\$7.80**SOFIX
Floor Cleaner
Assorted
1L
U.P. \$8.80**SAVE 12%****\$6.95**COMBAT
Ant Mini
12s
U.P. \$7.90**SAVE 11%****\$7.95**COMBAT
Roach Killing Bait Strip
10s
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S-E Asia views China's rise with caution: Survey

Poll of 1,000 people in region finds low level of trust in China to contribute to global peace, security, prosperity

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

While China is seen as exerting the most economic influence in South-east Asia, and is expected to vie for political leadership in the region as the United States becomes more indifferent, few view the Asian giant as a “benign and benevolent power”, a survey has found.

Trust in China to do the “right thing” in contributing to global peace, security, prosperity and governance is also low.

The findings, by the Asean Studies

Centre at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, are compiled in a study, State of South-east Asia: 2019, that was released yesterday.

It polled more than 1,000 South-east Asians, comprising experts and stakeholders from the policy, research, business, civil society, and media communities.

They were asked for their views on regional affairs in an online survey last November and December.

Nearly six in 10 said US power and influence on the global stage have either deteriorated or deteriorated substantially, compared with a year ago.

About 68 per cent also held the view that the level of US engagement with South-east Asia under the Trump administration has fallen.

Correspondingly, 68.1 per cent are “unsure of or have little confidence in the US’ reliability as a strategic partner and provider of regional security”, said the report.

Those surveyed see China’s influence in the region increasing as a result of the US stepping back.

About three out of four expect China “to vie for political leadership in response to the growing indifference of the US towards South-east Asia and Asean”, said the report.

China is also seen as wielding the most economic influence in South-east Asia, with 73 per cent saying so.

But fewer than one in 10 sees China as “a benign and benevolent power”.

Most, or 51.5 per cent, have either little or no confidence that China will “do the right thing” in contributing to global peace, security, prosperity and governance.

Dr Tang Siew Mun, who heads the Asean Studies Centre, said the findings highlight Asean’s conundrum of dealing with two major powers whom it does not trust fully.

“Asean’s trust deficit with China stems from the stress of dealing with an increasingly assertive, powerful neighbour who appears to harbour ambitions of wanting the region to dance to its tune,” he said.

“Beijing’s repeated pressure on Asean to cut off its engagement with other major powers, especially the US, also lends credence to the growing perception that China has hegemonic designs on the region,” he told The Straits Times.

Dr Tang said it was no surprise that 45.5 per cent of the respondents think China will become a revisionist power in the near future.

On the US side, Dr Tan said there is “grave concern” over Washing-

ton’s uneven engagement in the region, which has fallen from the high of the Obama administration’s “pivot strategy” to “an abyss of a vague and undefined Asia policy”.

While the recently passed Asia Reassurance Initiative Act – which will beef up US presence in the Indo-Pacific region – is a bid to address the issue, Dr Tang said the impetus for the Act came from Congress, not the Trump administration.

On the poll’s pessimistic findings on China, Dr Tang does not think there is a strong strain of “anti-China” sentiment in the region.

“China, however, has not lived up to its ‘win-win’ mantra... While China lauds the exponential growth in its bilateral trade with Asean, it has not given enough attention to its ballooning trade surplus with Asean, which now stands at almost US\$70 billion (\$895 billion).”

He added: “China’s actions in the South China Sea have unnerved the region on how China might use its growing political and military might at the expense of its smaller neighbours.”

But, Dr Tang said, in all fairness, China is judged unfairly against other big powers who have had the advantage of “operating” at the global level for a long time.

“Beijing is still getting accustomed to fitting into the shoes of a global power,” he added.

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73%

Percentage of survey respondents who see China as wielding the most economic influence in South-east Asia.

51.5%

Percentage of survey respondents who have little or no confidence that China will “do the right thing” in contributing to global peace, security, prosperity and governance.

Beware of burnout, new Senior Counsel tells junior lawyers

Fabian Koh

Junior lawyers should be aware of potential burnout by constantly taking stock of their work and purpose, said Mr Foo Chee Hock, dean of the Singapore Judicial College.

This is because they can expect to invest a lot of time and energy in their legal career at the expense of other aspects of life, he added.

“If you are pushing yourself very hard, you need to question whether that lifestyle is sustainable. If you’re working 14 to 18 hours a day, how long before you lose your edge?” said Mr Foo, 58.

One of four new Senior Counsels appointed yesterday, Mr Foo cited the workload and the learning

curve as challenges, adding that the pressure on the job “is real”.

He said junior lawyers should thus take stock of the situation from time to time, to reflect and decide if working such long hours is really what they want.

Ultimately, work should be something that brings meaning and fulfilment, he said.

“You need to know you’re doing the right thing and doing it right, that this is what you want for yourself,” he added.

Mr Foo was appointed as a Honorary Senior Counsel on the opening day of the 2019 legal year, along with Ms Foo Tuat Yien, 65, former judicial commissioner on the Supreme Court Bench.

Honorary Senior Counsels are non-lawyers recognised for their special knowledge in law and contributions to the development of the law and legal profession, said Ms Serene Wee, chief executive of the Singapore Law Academy.

Alongside Mr Foo and Ms Foo, Law Society president and Rajah & Tann partner Gregory Vijayendran, 50, and Mr Siraj Omar, 46, who heads the commercial disputes practice at Premier Law LLC, were appointed Senior Counsels.

Started in 1997, the Senior Counsel scheme recognises the best and most skilful advocates in the legal



(From left) Mr Gregory Vijayendran, Mr Foo Chee Hock and Mr Siraj Omar were among those appointed Senior Counsels yesterday. They advise junior lawyers to keep believing in their dreams, use their knowledge of the law to help their clients and to constantly take stock of their work and purpose. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

profession. The four additions bring the total number of Senior Counsels to 85.

Mr Siraj also weighed in with some advice for junior lawyers, emphasising that the role of lawyers is not to educate their clients on the

law, but to use their knowledge of the law to help their clients.

“Put yourself in the shoes of the client. Imagine this was a problem you were facing. What would you expect from your lawyer? Then give your client that same degree

of importance,” he said.

For Mr Vijayendran, it is crucial for junior lawyers to have mentors, and to learn the very best from them. But, more importantly, he urged junior lawyers to keep believing in their dreams and to never

give up despite failures.

“For junior lawyers, I would say this: Fail forward. Second, keep believing in your dreams, persevere and practise,” he said.

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Design Orchard set to open with 61 local brands

Melissa Heng

Design Orchard, the new home for Singapore labels in Orchard Road, will open its doors on Jan 25 with 61 home-grown brands.

Located at the junction of Orchard Road and Cairnhill Road, the 2½-storey mall will include a retail showcase on the first level, incubation spaces on the second level, and a cafe and events space on the rooftop.

Home-grown retailer Naisse will operate the first-level retail showcase, which will span 9,000 sq ft.

Other Singapore brands featured include fragrance and candle brand Artisan of Sense, womenswear label Olothe, furniture manufacturer SoftRock Living and social enterprise The Animal Project.

The new mall, a joint development by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), JTC Corporation and Enterprise Singapore, will include an incubation space on the second floor, which will be operated by the Textile and Fashion Federation Singapore (Taff).



Design Orchard, at the junction of Orchard and Cairnhill roads, will open on Jan 25. The mall will have a retail showcase on the first level, incubation spaces on the second, and a cafe and events space on the rooftop. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Here, Taff will nurture independent designers and fashion businesses by offering co-working spaces with resources such as professional sewing equipment, a fabric library and collaboration and networking opportunities with industry players.

Naisse will also run a mentorship programme, covering areas such as marketing and merchandising, for the brands in its retail showcase.

The programme has already enlisted 19 mentors, including well-known entrepreneurs such as Unlisted Collection founder Loh Lik Peng, Spa Esprit Group founder Cynthia Chua and Motherswork

founder Sharon Wong.

In a media statement, Ms Ranita Sundra, director of retail and dining at STB, said visitors to the shopping belt can look forward to “a livelier and more exciting Orchard Road” with the opening of the new mall.

“Singapore is home to many global brands. As these brands become more ubiquitous, we noticed that more people are drawn to local products with a Singapore story. Design Orchard is thus an exciting opportunity for us to profile the best of Singapore talent under one roof.”

Designed by local firm Woha Architects, the mall has a clean and modern design of concrete, glass,

timber and landscape elements.

The building features a sloping rooftop, with lush greenery and timber seats, which will be open to the public. It doubles as an amphitheatre for lifestyle and fashion events.

Ms Wee Pei Yean, director of products at JTC, said Design Orchard is a new home and showcase for local design.

“We hope that it will inspire local talents to join the community, where they can develop and grow their brands with access to mentors, programmes and facilities in a vibrant space along Orchard Road.”

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Man gets 8 months’ jail for ill-treating stepdaughter

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A nine-year-old girl was sleeping on the sofa when her stepfather woke her up by pressing a lit cigarette against her right hand.

Two days later, he kicked her face for no apparent reason.

The 29-year-old jobless man, who cannot be named because of a gag order to protect his stepdaughter’s identity, was jailed for eight months yesterday after pleading guilty to one count of ill-treating a child.

A second charge for a similar offence involving the same girl was considered during sentencing.

The girl is now living with relatives of her biological father.

The first incident happened after the girl fell asleep while watching television with her stepfather in a Holland Close flat on Nov 4, 2017.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Sheryl Yeo said: “So as to wake the victim up, the accused used his lit cigarette and pressed it hard against the victim’s right hand, near the area of her wrist.

“He intended to wake her up by burning her. On previous occasions, the accused had also woken the victim up in a similar manner.”

Two days later, the girl was sweeping the floor when the man walked over and kicked her. She was hit in her left eye.

He then “nonchalantly” walked off to watch television, said the DPP.

The girl did not go to school that day as she was in pain.

She returned to classes on Nov 7, 2017, and her teacher noticed a bruise on her face.

The school alerted the Child Protective Service and the girl was taken to KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital the following day for a check-up.

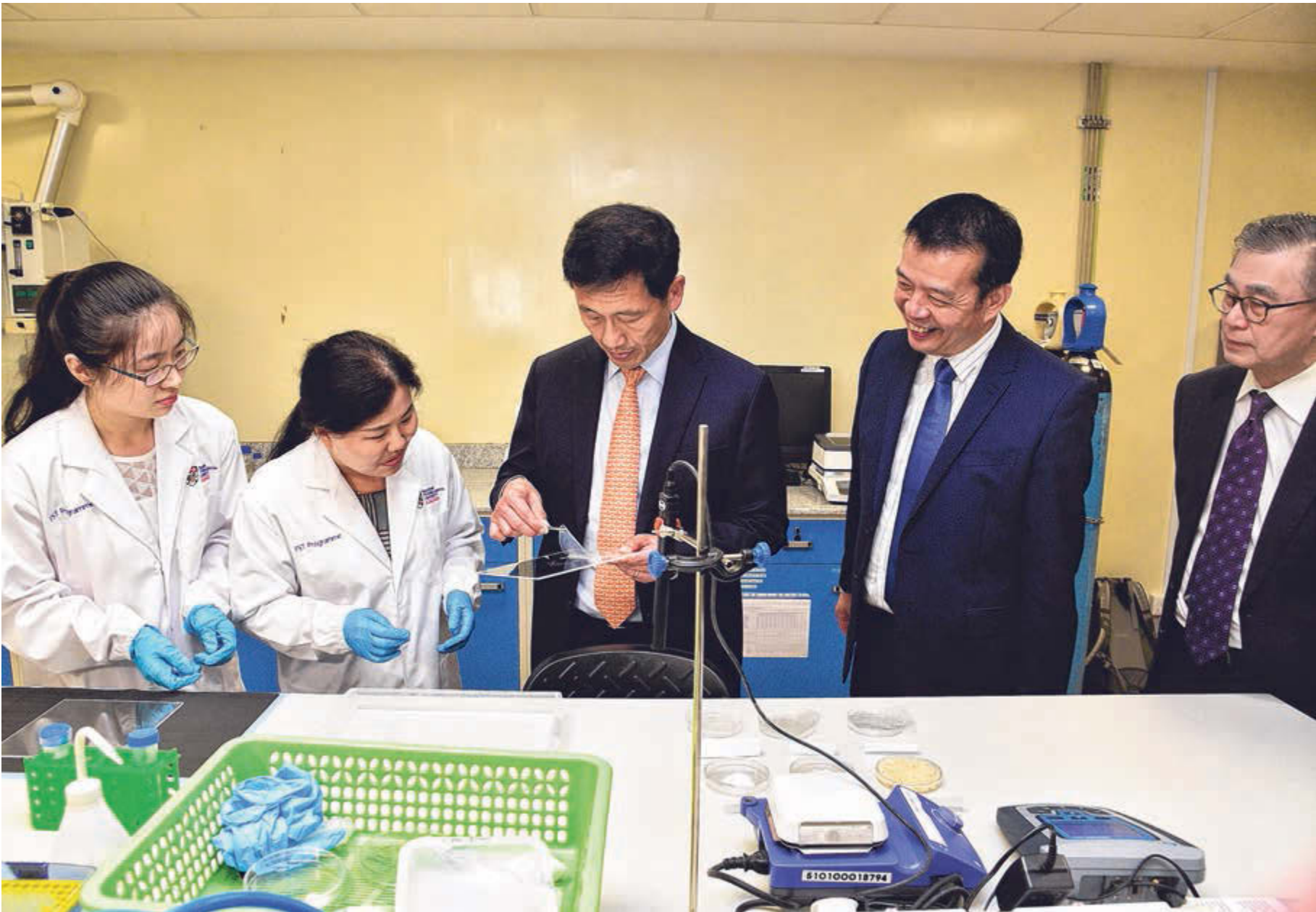
A medical report dated Dec 28 that year stated that she had injuries including a burn on her right wrist and a bruise around her left eye.

DPP Yeo urged District Judge Kessler Soh to sentence the stepfather to at least eight months in jail, stressing that he had hurt the girl “out of cruelty”.

The man, who was unrepresented, pleaded for leniency.

For ill-treating the child, he could have been jailed for up to four years and fined up to \$4,000.

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Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung (centre) examining a biodegradable cellulose film packaging in the laboratory with (from left) PhD student Cui Xi; research fellow Zhao Guili; Professor William Chen, director of NTU's Food Science and Technology programme; and Mr Koh Poh Tiong, director and adviser of F&N. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Turning food waste into something useful

NTU teams up with F&N to develop new ways to reduce food wastage by prolonging shelf life of food produce

Vanessa Liu

Imagine food waste being turned into biodegradable food packaging or even returned to the food chain to enhance a product's nutritional value.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is teaming up with food and beverage company F&N for the next four years so that these innovations can find their way into food products sold commercially.

The joint laboratory will be part of the university's Food Science and Technology programme.

The F&N-NTU F&B Innovation Lab, located in the School of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, was launched yesterday by Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung.

National Environment Agency figures show that the amount of food waste generated in Singapore

has increased by about 40 per cent over the past 10 years. Only 16 per cent of more than 800,000 tonnes of food waste produced here in 2017 was recycled.

Professor Subra Suresh, president of NTU, said in his speech that the lab will develop new ways to reduce food wastage by prolonging the shelf life of food produce.

Food sustainability and security are important areas of concern for Singapore, where more than 90 per cent of the food consumed is imported.

He added: "Currently, traditional food-processing technology mainly targets the storage and transportation aspects of F&B products, but does not adequately address the large amount of food waste that arises from manufacturing processes."

To plug that gap, the joint lab will tap the university's existing re-

search capabilities. For example, it will look at more effective methods of recovering food nutrients from food waste, before returning them to the food chain.

Professor William Chen, director of the Food Science and Technology programme, said that among other things, the lab will look at sustainable ways to incorporate

WASTAGE NOT TARGETED

Currently, traditional food-processing technology mainly targets the storage and transportation aspects of F&B products, but does not adequately address the large amount of food waste that arises from manufacturing processes.



PROFESSOR SUBRA SURESH, president of Nanyang Technological University.

micronutrients that are produced as a by-product of the fermentation process into F&N products to enhance their nutritional value. The micronutrients include amino acids, vitamins and antioxidants.

But he said it can take up to five years for innovations in the lab to be applied to food products on a commercial level.

About 30 researchers from NTU and F&N's research and development department, as well as students from the university's programme, will be involved in research projects funded by the food and beverage company.

F&N's chief executive of non-alcoholic beverages Lee Meng Tat said of the company's first long-term joint research partnership with an academic institution: "This partnership offers us the opportunity to tap NTU's strength in research excellence as well as its cutting-edge facilities to enhance innovation."

He added: "In line with our commitment to deliver sustainable business practices, our collaboration with NTU will see the furthering of our green efforts, as well as catering to the health and nutritional needs of our consumers."

In 2016, Singapore launched its Food Manufacturing Industry Transformation Map with the vision of developing the country into the leading food and nutrition hub in Asia with globally competitive food companies.

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Ex-police NSF who shared confidential info gets probation

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A police full-time national serviceman (NSF) accessed a computer at the operations room of the Special Operations Command (SOC), took a photo of the screen and sent it to a colleague.

The image, which contained confidential information on police operations, was later forwarded to a drug abuser who messaged his friends, saying: "Stop everything tonite (sic) full ops."

Separately, Muhammad Alif Muhammad Jamil also ran a blog inviting netizens to submit obscene videos which he would then upload online.

Alif, 21, who has since completed his national service and is now a student, was sentenced to probation for a year and three months yesterday.

The former police special constable corporal pleaded guilty in October last year to an offence under the Official Secrets Act and five counts of transmitting obscene videos.

As part of his probation, he must perform 150 hours of community service and his mother was bonded for \$5,000 to ensure his good behaviour.

The court heard that on April 17, 2016, a 26-year-old man forwarded an obscene video of his former girlfriend to Alif, asking him to make it go viral.

Alif uploaded it onto his blog and the 24-year-old woman confronted her former boyfriend when she found out about it three days later.

The older man told Alif to delete the video and he complied on April 21, 2016.

The woman also lodged a police report that day.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Lee Zu Zhao said that during investigations, officers found that Alif had also transmitted four more obscene videos that other netizens had sent to him.

The court also heard that Alif was working as an operator at the SOC on Oct 4, 2016, when a colleague, Muhd Firdaus Abdullah, 21, sent him a text message, asking him to check on police operations.

Alif then snapped a picture of the computer display showing confidential information before forwarding it to Firdaus, who was then working as a sentry at the SOC.

DPP Lee said that Alif did as he was told even though he did not know why Firdaus wanted the information.

Firdaus, who has already been dealt with in court, forwarded the picture to his sister's boyfriend, who in turn sent it to the drug abuser.

Alif's offence came to light the next day when the Central Narcotics Bureau arrested a 32-year-old woman and one of its officers found the picture on her mobile phone.

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Muhammad Alif Muhammad Jamil, who had forwarded confidential information on police operations to a colleague, was sentenced to probation for a year and three months yesterday. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

Licensing breaches: 6 leisure spots under probe

Choo Yun Ting

Six public entertainment outlets were found to have contravened licensing conditions during a nine-day crime prevention and enforcement operation conducted by the Clementi Police Division between Dec 17 and 25 last year.

The police are investigating the six outlets, and action will be taken against the operators for flouting the regulations under the Public Entertainment Act, the authorities said in a statement yesterday.

A 35-year-old man was also ar-



rested for his suspected involvement in cheating by impersonation and criminal intimidation.

During the operation, the police conducted enforcement checks at industrial and residential premises, as well as public entertainment outlets.

In addition, patrols were stepped up at mass congregation areas and roadblocks. A total of 422 people were checked during the operation.

In the light of the upcoming Chinese New Year festivities, the police have reminded the public to remain vigilant against crime.

The police said they take a serious view of anyone found breaking the law and will continue to take a tough enforcement stance against such activities.

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Six public entertainment outlets were found to have flouted licensing conditions during a police operation last month. PHOTO: SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE

422

Total number of people who were checked during the nine-day crime prevention and enforcement operation.

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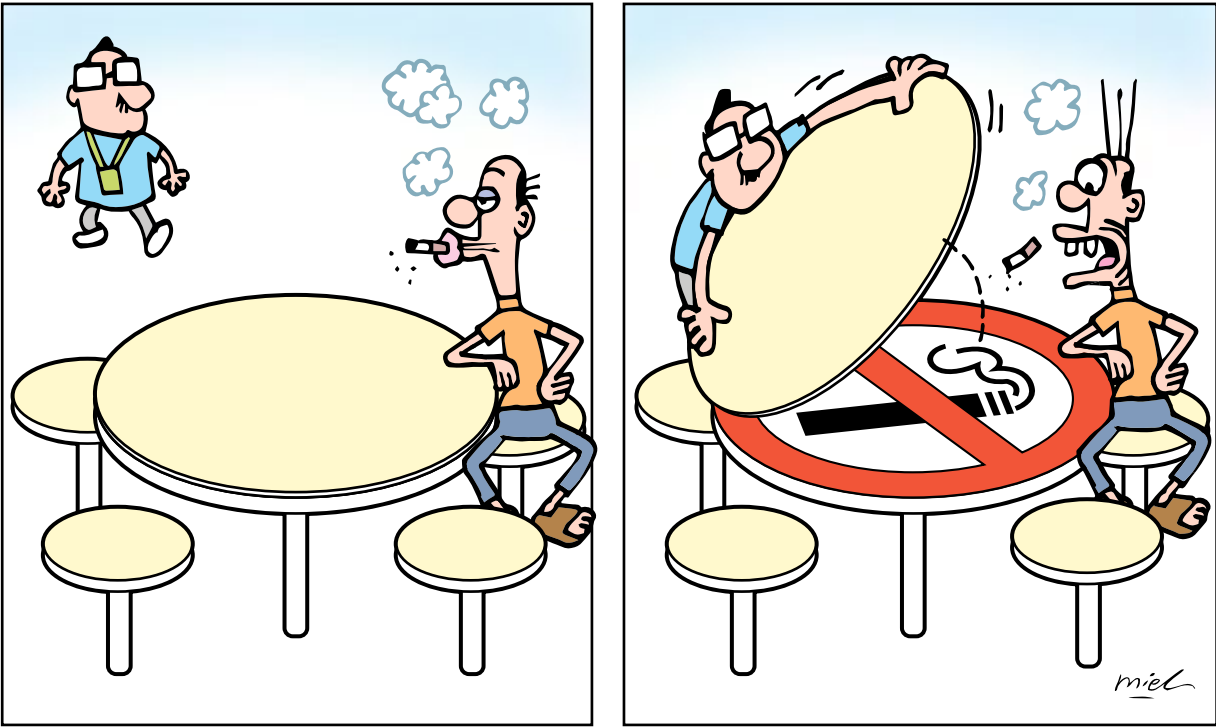
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FORUM

Miel's TAKE

With Orchard Road becoming a no-smoking zone, coffee shops could be next



SNEC to cut charges for complex procedures

We refer to Ms Salma Khalik's commentary (Are MediShield Life payouts lower than subsidised fees?; Jan 4).

The Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) reviews and makes adjustments to its charges periodically to strike a balance between cost recovery and patient affordability. The cost for the most common procedures, such as cataract and glaucoma surgery, are closely monitored to ensure patients can pay with Medisave and make minimal cash outlay.

As a tertiary referral centre, less common but complex cases, with high risk of complications, would require the expertise of senior and experienced surgeons.

Such surgery requires longer operating time. For Mr Seow Ban Yam's case, a duct drainage operation was required for both eyes. The surgery took three hours.

Duct drainage surgery is not common. Of the 42,000 procedures SNEC performed in 2017, there were only seven such cases.

Research and training are important pillars of SNEC's mission.

Its budget for research and education are funded separately by government grants, philanthropy and other income totally unrelated to clinical revenue from subsidised patients.

SNEC recognises that it could do more frequent cost reviews to close prevailing gaps between current cost burden of patients and what it charges for financial sustainability.

With the latest review of SNEC's charges to better align a wider range of procedures with Medisave and MediShield claim limits, patients requiring complex operations of higher surgical table codes will see reduced charges, including that which Mr Seow underwent.

SNEC will introduce the fee revisions from March 1.

No patient requiring care, whether for simple or complex conditions, will be denied treatment due to an inability to pay.

Our staff are able to advise on the various government financial assistance schemes for patients who need them and these are further supplemented by philanthropic funds raised by SNEC for needy patients.

Charity Wai (Ms)
Chief Operating Officer
Singapore National Eye Centre

MediShield Life claim limits cover large majority of subsidised bills

We refer to Ms Salma Khalik's commentary (Are MediShield Life payouts lower than subsidised fees?; Jan 4).

When MediShield Life was launched in 2015, the claim limits were set to cover nine out of 10 subsidised bills.

Based on latest available figures, eight in 10 subsidised bills were within the MediShield Life claim limits, and nine in 10 were within \$230 of the claim limits.

The remaining bills tend to be those of a more complex nature or were cases which involved higher income patients who received lower means-tested subsidies.

Overall, MediShield Life provides Singaporeans with protection against large bills, with affordable premiums. In particular, having a deductible for each year and a co-insurance borne by the patient, ensures that MediShield Life remains sustainable, and premiums kept affordable.

Even with the co-payment, MediShield Life, in tandem with Medisave, allows for eight in 10 subsidised hospital bills to be paid with \$100 or less in cash, and seven in 10 are fully paid without any additional cash outlay by the patient.

In some cases, however, the patient's co-payment can be high. In most of these cases, the procedure would not have been a straightforward one. In Mr Seow Ban Yam's case, for instance, the procedure he had to undergo (bilateral dacryocystorhinostomy) is uncommon and complex, and was performed by a senior consultant.

There is an ongoing review of claim limits, and the consequential impact on premiums, to ensure that MediShield Life's coverage remains broad-based and sustainable. The review will be completed by end 2020.

In the meantime, patients who face financial difficulties can apply for assistance such as Medifund to ensure that healthcare remains affordable.

In the case of SNEC, its charges are being reviewed to ensure they remain affordable, including for operations such as dacryocystorhinostomy.

SNEC will introduce these fee revisions from March 1.

We stress that no Singaporean will be denied essential healthcare treatment due to inability to pay.

The Government provides significant subsidies of up to 80 per cent to keep healthcare costs low, and all Singaporeans are protected against large healthcare bills through MediShield Life.

Patients can pay for the co-payment part of their bills with their Medisave. Medifund and various forms of financial assistance at our public institutions are also available for those in need.

Lim Siok Peng (Ms)
Director, Corporate Communications Division
Ministry of Health

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Make buying pets impulsively harder instead

People who are truly concerned for animal welfare should be assisting the Government to improve the welfare standards and conditions that pet stores have to uphold, instead of clamouring for consumer choices to be limited (Singapore should also limit pet sales to rescue animals; Jan 3). There have been instances overseas where limiting consumers' options has led to errant animal welfare groups purchasing animals from private breeders and supplying them to pet stores for a profit.

Drastic legislation will not stop puppy mills or commercial breeders but, instead, pave the way for illegal supply chains which could be more difficult to monitor. Animal rescue groups should also be subject to high levels of scrutiny and transparency, on a par with that of any commercial breeder. No organisation that is involved with animals should be overlooked just because they claim to be rescue centres or shelters. A more pragmatic approach to tackling the problem would be to

make it harder for people to purchase pets on impulse. It could take the form of the owner possessing a small animal licence before the ownership of an animal can be transferred from the pet store to the owner. The pet industry is one of the fastest growing market segments globally and, in the commercial interest of Singapore, drastic legislation like making pet stores sell only strays should not be supported as it could effectively shut down the pet industry. **Ong Junkai**

School admission must be meritocratic

Several writers have made suggestions similar to that of Mr Gerard Lee How Cheng to tackle the problem of inequality (Spread top students among more schools; Jan 3). The most likely result of such a move would be a decrease in the overall talent level in Singapore. Admission to the best schools must follow the principle of meritocracy. Harm is done when

you deny a prized place to applicants who meet the stringent entry requirements, while accepting applicants who do not. Spreading the most talented students among more schools is a disincentive for the best to work hard. Just look at the negative results of affirmative action in other countries, where racial quotas resulted in the top tier of

talent leaving for greener pastures. The creme de la creme wish to challenge themselves in a competitive environment. They must not be denied entry to the best schools to achieve their dreams. The Ministry of Education should be helping our young and aspiring talents to level up, not the other way around. **Edmund Khoo Kim Hock**

Not possible for law to be exact in classifying workers

Statutes cannot be thoroughly explicit in classifying a worker as an employee or an independent contractor (Employee or independent contractor – law needs to be clear, by Aware; Jan 4). A worker is an employee when the business has the right to direct and control the work performed by the worker, even if that right is not exercised.

Prima facie, a contract stating whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor is not sufficient to determine the worker's status. Classifying an employee as an independent contractor with no basis for doing so makes employers liable for employment taxes. Certain employers who can provide a basis for not treating a

worker as an employee may have the opportunity to avoid paying employment taxes. An individual who faces financial risk, bears all responsibility for profit or loss and accounts for all costs incurred in the pursuit of profit is likely to be determined a contractor. A contractor is paid per job as opposed to receiving an annual

Take action against voyeuristic accounts on social media

It has been about four months since news broke about the racy social media account SgInstaBabes, which was shut down (Man under fire for racy subscription scheme; Aug 30, 2018). However, it worries me to see that similar accounts still exist. One such account posts pictures of female students supposedly without their consent or knowledge. Pictures started going up in October last year and, as of Jan 5, the account has close to 2,000 followers on Instagram. It is disturbing to see that photos of young girls are being misused this way. Not only were photos posted, but the account holder has also written lewd captions for some of them. Pictures were also put up as Instagram stories for followers to rate the girls' appearances. A friend of mine was traumatised

to find that her photo had been posted without her consent. Judging from the account's description, it appears that the pictures were submitted by users. Hence, it is highly possible that users obtained the pictures from the girls' social media accounts without their permission. Can the authorities clarify if such actions run afoul of the law? What are the rules surrounding personal photos being misused and sexually exploited on social media? Is this also considered an act of sexual harassment, and should legal action apply to the people posting or submitting such photos? The authorities should investigate such voyeuristic platforms and action should be taken against those behind such pages. **Sean Lim Wei Xin**

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OnFacebook

Should NSFs be posted to work as ICA checkpoint officers to help immigration officials?

I totally agree as this is also part of national service. Moreover, there has been a manpower crunch at the checkpoints recently. With the strict criteria that only citizens can be immigration officers, our full-time servicemen are the best candidates. **Clifton Lock**

It is a good idea to deploy full-time national servicemen to work under ICA after their military training. They will learn to study human faces and characters without using machines. It is an asset. **Anthony Lim**

It is unfair to use NSFs to do such a job and such front-line roles should be handled by full-time staff.

Maybe ICA can consider giving out extra incentives during manpower shortages, so as to encourage staff to stay and help during peak periods. **Astro Astro**

Why NSFs? This job should be given to Singaporeans who are in need of a secure full-time permanent salary. **Merikatakita Tomoshilukitekari**

Allow NSFs to serve in different government agencies and hospitals after completion of training where their skills are fully recognised and utilised. **Desmen Low**

If they are able to learn something, why not? Pay them more and do not use them as cheap labour. **Raymond Lim**

There are NSFs patrolling airports as well. No difference in their missions. **Andrew Nai**

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Inflammatory Marker		✓	✓	✓	✓
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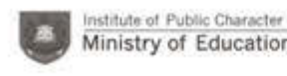
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